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TENNESSEE COUNTY HISTORY SERIES

# Henderson County



by G. Tillman Stewart

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This history is respectfully dedicated to the school teachers of Henderson County—past, present, and future—whose dedication and devotion to their duties will live on in the annals of humanity.

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## Preface

This history was written to meet the need for a current history of Henderson County. Three histories of the county have been previously published: the Goodspeed Publishing Company's volume in 1887, Bolen's *Henderson County's History* in 1922, and Auburn Power's *History of Henderson County* in 1930. Due to the burning of the Henderson County Courthouse and records in May of 1863, it has been difficult for all writers to compile a comprehensive history; however, creditable histories of the county have been written.

It is the intent of this author to present an accurate narrative of the origin and growth of Henderson County up to contemporary time. The usual pattern of modern historians to departmentalize information has been followed here; consequently, in this volume the events have been cited in chronological order, enabling the reader better to relate the times with the events. The author hopes that this volume will serve the needs of knowledge, joy, and pleasure for its readers.

G. Tillman Stewart  
Lexington, Tennessee



*H*ENDERSON County has one of the most diversified topographies of any West Tennessee county. Lexington, the county seat, at 720 feet above sea level, has the highest elevation of any county seat in the western part of the state. The county's highest lands are located on the Highland Ridge that passes through the county, entering in the southeast near old Jack's Creek Church and continuing in a northerly direction into Carroll County. This ridge also is known locally as Feather Ridge. Water that falls on the east side of the ridge flows into the Tennessee River; water that falls on its west side flows into the Mississippi River. The ridge continues through Sand Ridge Community, east of Union Cross Community, and goes out of the county at a point northwest of Wildersville. Approximately 60 percent of the county lies east of this ridge, which at one time was known as Purdy Range in honor of John Purdy, one of the county's founding settlers.

Under the land of Henderson County is a limestone formation of the Mesozoic Era. This layer of limestone is a sedimentary formation that crops out at the Tennessee River, where hundreds of fossils can be found embedded in rocks, and it extends to the Mississippi River and, in some cases, beyond.

This diversified land surface created numerous streams, many of which were fed by everlasting springs of free-stone water. These streams formed brooks or branches that have creeks as small tributaries. These creeks meander through meadows and leas, between ridges and hills, and into Beech River.

Named for the immense number of large beech trees in the river bottom, Beech River is the largest stream of water in the county. The river rises some seven miles northeast of Lexington and flows southwest until it reaches the present city limits where it forms Beech Lake. Leaving the man-made lake, it flows south about a mile, forms a semicircle around Lexington, and then runs eastward emptying into the Tennessee River above Perryville.

Beech River has several main tributaries. Wilson Branch, now called Town Branch, rises near the Lexington cemetery and flows directly into the river. This branch was named for Samuel Wilson, the founder of Lexington. Wolf Creek, named for timber wolves that inhabited its headwaters at what has been known as Council Woods, rises in Palestine Community and flows east to empty into the river. Lick Branch, named for a salt lick near its origin, is as large as some creeks and rises near what is known as the Fred Woods place and flows east into the river.

Piney Creek heads about a mile east of the Highland Ridge near what was known as Thomas Community. The creek flows east a short distance and fills Pine Lake, formed by the dam built by the Beech River Watershed. Piney Creek runs through a canyon known as Pine Knobs. Its Big Knob and Little Knob are a mile in length and are covered with large growths of tall native pine trees, hence the name, Piney Creek. It empties into Beech River after leaving Pine Knobs.

Dry Creek, so called because it does not run fully during the entire year, rises on what is known as the G. H. Buck place and flows south into the river. A dam forming Sycamore Lake is a part of this creek. Cane Creek rises near Highway 100, not far from what was known as the Jones Austin farm, and empties into the river east of the Chesterfield–Middleburg Road. Although

dry part of the year, the creek's bottomland still contains rich soil. The creek received its name from the large canebreaks growing along its banks. To the north, Big Creek rises some five miles from Highway 20, forms a lake, then flows directly south into the river. Browns Creek, named for the early settler Nathaniel Brown, rises north of its lake, flows through south Natchez Trace Park, and forms Pin Oak Lake.

Haley's Creek rises a mile and one-half southwest of the John A. McCall farm, forms Red Bud Lake, then flows directly south to the river. Lick Creek, named for the several salt licks near its heading at the Reed School Community, flows south to the river. Harmon's Creek, named for Major John Harmon, rises west of Oak Grove Community and flows south to the river. Owls Creek, named for the large number of owls that roosted nearby, rises from a large spring on what was known as the Bass place and flows directly to the river. Through these tributaries Beech River drains approximately one-third of the county.

Another river, the Big Sandy, rises in the Longsought Community, flows north through Carroll County, turns slightly east through Benton County, and empties into the Tennessee River in Henry County. Big Sandy rises in a section of sandy land, hence its name. Beaver, North Fork, Big Beaver, and Olive Branch are its tributaries. Cub Creek surfaces in the northeast part of the county, forms Cub Creek Lake at Natchez Trace Park, flows east through Decatur County, and empties into the Tennessee River. Doe Creek appears a mile north of the Sardis-Scotts Hill Highway and flows through part of Presley Community, southeast into the river. Little Hurricane Creek rises two miles northwest of Sardis and flows into Middleton Creek. Big Hurricane rises south of Reagan, and Middleton Creek rises south of Center Hill Community; both enter Chester County and continue to White Oak River, also a tributary of the Tennessee River. All these rivers, creeks, and streams drain the county east of the Highland Ridge.

Middlefork Creek, one of the numerous prongs of Forked Deer River, rises near Stegall and McAdams communities, flows in a westerly direction into Madison County. There it joins the

south fork and is one of several creeks on the west side of the divide. Another prong rises south of Juno about one mile south of Highway 20, curves around Huron, then flows west into Middlefork. The north fork, larger than the other two, rises near Bargerton, flows southwesterly, and then northwesterly to empty into another prong near the Madison–Carroll County line. Spring and Griffin creeks are small tributaries.

About six miles on each side of the Highland Ridge are numerous everlasting springs. At one time there were five springs located within 100 yards of the Palestine Church. The main public spring has been in use for over 150 years. Its clear, cool water runs out of a pipe located several inches above ground. The top of the spring is covered with concrete, and 30-inch tiles bank the ground for eight feet. People still stop there to quench their thirst.

An unusual spring, known as Boiling Spring, was located 150 yards behind Palestine Church. Water boiled and foamed out of the ground from an eight- to ten-foot diameter hole. It has been reported that a person could pitch a fence rail into the hole and watch it disappear, only to see it shoot up and out of the hole later. This spring mysteriously changed location each year but never moved out of a 15-yard radius. Sand and top soil, carried by Wolf Creek, have destroyed this miracle of nature. Today, all that remains of the spring is a small trickle of water.

Early settlers built homes close to these springs. Later, as they moved or settled on lands where springs did not exist, wells were dug. Water usually could be reached at a depth of 20 to 50 feet. Wells later were bored by using augers, measuring about six inches in diameter, pushed by two men. Hundreds of homes used cisterns, holes dug in the ground near the house. Rain that fell on the roof of a house was channeled into the cistern and was considered pure enough for cooking, washing, and drinking.

Henderson County has a variety of soils ranging from the rich soil located in well-drained valleys to that known as non-productive “crayfish” soil. The red soil on hills and flat lands was considered at one time to be poor, but this clay loam, when given proper care, has proved to be valuable. Lexington clay, which



begins in what is Rhodes Town near Laster School and extends eastward to include the late J. D. Roberts' farm, is considered to be good quality soil, ranging from three to six miles in width.

The Soil Conservation Service of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, in cooperation with the Tennessee Agricultural Experiment Station and the Tennessee Valley Authority, conducted a soil survey in 1960. The survey report included maps of the different kinds of soil on every farm in the county and divided the county's soil into six main types with variations: Ina-beechy-Hymon; Ruston-Lexington; Lexington-Ruston; Shubuta-Cuthbert; Dulac-Tippah-Cuthbert; and Ruston-Shubuta-Silerton.

The climate of the county is similar to that of most counties in West and Middle Tennessee. The average temperature from 1940 to 1970 was 62.4 degrees, average rainfall, 50 inches, and average snowfall, 5.4 inches. The frost-free period generally is from March 26 to November 10, or about 208 days. January is usually the coldest month, and July, the hottest.

Henderson County was a hunter's paradise when settlers first arrived. County topography was conducive to the propagation of wildlife. Forests were full of hickory and persimmon trees which provided food for both man and small game. There were also chestnuts and hazelnuts. Wild blackberries, dewberries, and strawberries were delicacies consumed by man and such animals as rabbits, raccoons, squirrels, and groundhogs. Area carnivores were panthers, wolves, wildcats, and bobcats, and the small fur-bearing animals were mink, muskrat, weasel, and red and gray fox. Colonies of beavers thrived on most streams, and their dams sometimes backed water onto cultivated crops. Black bears roamed the hills and valleys. Buffalo were plentiful west of Highland Ridge. However, due to their size and to the value of their flesh and hide, they were soon slaughtered. No mention of buffalo in Henderson County was made after 1835.

When Henderson County was settled, song birds, both migratory and native, were abundant. Quail and wild turkey were plentiful. Wild pigeons were prized because of their plumage and delicious meat. Cardinals, bluebirds, mockingbirds,

house wrens, jaybirds, and whippoorwills were present. Martins, imported from Europe, quickly spread throughout the land. Many farmers built houses for these birds because they fought hawks and other predatory birds. In recent years, the number of cardinals in the county has diminished, and the bluebird is practically extinct. Crows and red-headed woodpeckers have fallen prey to man's disruption of nature's balance, as have the redwing blackbirds and mockingbirds. Turkey buzzards are rare, and bald eagles are no longer seen in the county. Predatory birds, such as hawks and owls, once plentiful, still exist in small numbers; but large hoot owls or horned owls are rare.

The county has never been inhabited by rattlesnakes, although some existed at one time on Pine Knobs. In recent years, several have been found at Crawford Springs Community near the Madison County line. Area poisonous snakes are copperhead, cotton mouth, and water moccasin. Chicken snakes and black racers have been, and still are, the most plentiful of the harmless snakes. Toads and frogs are in greater supply now than when the county was young, since there were no man-made swamps then where these creatures seem to thrive best. Among the scavengers, the opossum is most plentiful.

Early settlers found the county's virgin timber to be of excellent quality, and the area is still considered to be a hardwood center. Trees dominant in the county are red and white oak, black jack, hickory, poplar, beech, cedar, sweet gum, and tupelo gum, as well as chestnut, sycamore, black walnut, and willow. Although much cutting occurred several times, there is still timber, due largely to the education of timber owners and especially to professional harvesting techniques.

High quality clay and sand have been the only materials commercialized to any extent in the county. They were used in the county's many brick kilns, primarily to make bricks for chimneys and commercial buildings. Kilns usually were located near construction sites. In the middle 1920s a brick kiln was operated on what was known as the Jowers' property, near the present location of the Brown Shoe Company. Business was moderate, but the kiln fell victim of the Depression. About 1932

and continuing for more than 30 years, Ayers Mineral Company had a plant in Lexington that processed white, red, brown, and orange sand which was shipped across the nation and to foreign countries.

Oil represents a yet untapped resource. Some geologists believe there is oil under the county's limestone layer. However, at present, the quantity of oil is unknown, and it is too expensive to drill, but oil leases have been made for several thousand acres of land.

### *Early Inhabitants, Pioneers, and Settlers*

Mound builders, who seem to have lived mostly in the Mississippi Valley, Ohio, Indiana, Iowa, Tennessee, and Louisiana, were obviously among the first inhabitants of Henderson County. A physically small people comparatively, they built mounds for burial purposes, for defense, and apparently for other ceremonious activities. Examples of these mounds in West Tennessee are at Pittsburg Landing on the edge of Shiloh Battlefield, at Pinson, and at the experiment station in Jackson.

Pinson Mound is only four miles from what was originally the west line of Henderson County. Artifacts, identical to those found near the Pinson settlement, have been found as far east as Lexington. A smooth oval boulder used to crush grain was found near Lexington a decade ago. It was five and one-half inches long with a four-inch diameter and weighed seven pounds.

The first Indian tribe in the county probably was the Shawnee tribe of the Algonquin. After about 50 years, however, the Cherokees and Chickasaws forced the Shawnees out of West Tennessee. The Creeks and these tribes hunted and made temporary homes in what is now Henderson County. These Indians tended to build permanent communities near large or navigable rivers which served as a natural defense. For this reason, no permanent Indian settlements were located in Henderson County. However, parties of Indians frequently pitched camp near an area spring to hunt and trap for miles around.

It was inevitable that these tribes would clash over possession of hunting rights. There is evidence that three battles occurred in the county: one near Middleburg; one near Reagan, north of the head of Hurricane Creek; and the other, four miles south of Lexington on what is known as the Henderson County Poor Farm. Large numbers of arrowheads from the different tribes have been found as the land has been cleared. By the time settlers arrived, the Chickasaws had the territory almost to themselves.

The first white men in the area, according to the beliefs of some historians, were the Spaniards. When the Spanish explorer Hernando De Soto marched west in 1541 from the Carolinas through northern Alabama and northern Mississippi on his way to the Mississippi River, some of his men, in foraging for food, may have come as far north as the southern boundary of Henderson County. Two Spanish coins were found in 1865 or 1866 close to the banks of Hurricane Creek near where it enters Hardin County. Now in the Bee Grissom collection, these badly corroded coins were uncovered by soil erosion. The date on one coin appeared to be 1520, so it is possible that some of De Soto's men did trade with area Indians.

After the French trader M. Charleville built a store at Salt Lick on the Cumberland River where Nashville now stands, a trail was made from Port Prudhomme on the Chickasaw Bluffs to Salt Lick. The trail led through north Hardin County, then through Henderson County, and crossed the Tennessee River into Humphreys County. This was a known trail when the English settled East Tennessee and even before the beginning of the Revolutionary War. According to some written records French traders may have been among the first white men to enter the Henderson County area.

Pioneers are that breed of people who chose to settle in a wilderness where few dare to tread. Such was the case when the land west of the Appalachian Mountains was first settled. Some pioneers came with a desire for new land, others to escape political or religious unhappiness, and others for adventure—they all shared a common wanderlust. This pattern was repeated

several times, as early settlers continued to move westward. Some, however, remained behind and formed the foundation for a permanent place to live, work, love, and die.

Before settlers legally could settle in what is now Henderson County, it was necessary for a settlement to be made with the Chickasaw Indians who still claimed the land. General Andrew Jackson, Isaac Shelby, and John Overton were commissioned by the federal government to negotiate purchase of the land. The Chickasaw Cession was made on October 19, 1818, which ceded all lands in what is now West Tennessee. Another treaty in 1823, known as Overton's treaty, released all claims to any West Tennessee land.

Thus, it seemed as if everything was ready for settlement of the area. Settlers would be spared the Indian wars that the settlers of East and Middle Tennessee had to endure. There was a drawback, however. At the end of the Revolutionary War, the state of North Carolina was virtually bankrupt. In order to pay its war veterans, grants were given for land in Tennessee, part of North Carolina at the time. After Tennessee became a state, squabbles concerning the legality and the boundaries of these grants arose. Finally, resolutions occurred when the governor of Tennessee signed the land grants.

Not all North Carolina veterans moved across the mountains to live on land given to them; many sold their land grants for small amounts of money to land speculators who in turn sold them to settlers. These settlers moved to where they thought their land was located and had it surveyed. Consequently, property boundaries in many instances overlapped; it took some time before such conditions were cleared and pioneers were able to create new communities from the wilderness.

There is no question that Joseph Reed was the first settler to locate in Henderson County, although at the time he thought he was in Perry County, as did the surveyor Samuel Wilson, who later founded Lexington. The original warrant for Reed's land was issued October 11, 1820—little more than one year before Henderson County was created. Reed lived on his land four years before he actually received his land grant deed.

Reed was indeed a true pioneer. In the summer of 1817, he and his two sons, Jack and William, left the central part of North Carolina and crossed the rugged mountains into East Tennessee. There they made a small raft of logs and floated down the Tennessee River, pulling to land only long enough to hunt for wild game and to sleep on the ground at night. When the Reed party reached the mouth of Beech River, they abandoned their raft and trekked on foot until they came to a large, cold spring. This spring of sweet-tasting water came out of the ground near a small bluff, an ideal place to settle. Wandering through the surrounding forest, they made friends with a party of Chickasaw who hunted and fished with them.

Late that fall, Reed left his teenage sons in the care of their Indian friends and retraced the 600 miles across the mountains and rivers to North Carolina. In the spring of 1818 he returned in a one-horse cart with only enough necessary possessions to reach Tennessee, where his family would make a new home. Reed also brought some slaves, indicating that he was a man of some means who did not have to leave his settled North Carolina home.

Reed built a log house near the spring in 1818. The logs were cut on the pine knob and moved two or three miles to where the house was erected. These same logs exist today as part of the home and smoke house belonging to Goy Snider, a great-great grandson of Reed. This land grant tract is one of the few in Henderson County that still belongs to direct descendants of original settlers.

In the spring of 1817, John Bailey, a 15-year old boy, left his home in the foothills of North Carolina and headed west on foot. He carried with him only his muzzle-loading rifle, a powder horn, and a hunting knife. Undoubtedly a boy with a spirit of adventure, he continued west until he joined a group of Chickasaw near where Reagan Community is now located. After living with them for a year, he returned to North Carolina, remained there for a year, and then went to Kentucky for two years. Unable to forget West Tennessee, he came back, married, and became an ancestor of one of the county's famous families. He



Another Reed House was erected about 1830. It has been restored and relocated at Lakeland near Memphis by its owner, Edward Tony Reed, a direct descendant of Joseph Reed.

is buried at Union Hill cemetery near where he spent most of his life.

Shortly after the Reed family and slaves were settled to the task of making a new home, others made their way into the area. Samuel Wilson settled on 726 acres in what was to become Lexington, with his cabin located where the present United Methodist Church is situated. Abner Taylor came to the area almost at the same time. These two men furnished excellent leadership as the groundwork and organization of county self-government was laid. Wilson came to Henderson County from Wilson County, where he and his brother David, together with their father Zaccheus, had helped found that county. He also obtained other land grants in 16 counties.

Taylor came to Henderson County from the part of North Carolina that is now Carter County, Tennessee, and obtained a grant for 26 acres next to Wilson's land. He also obtained another land grant for 620 acres; with his brother, James, he obtained even more land grants. Like Wilson, Taylor was a land speculator and a shrewd, well-educated businessman who took an active part in the civic life of any community in which he lived. He secured land grant deeds in 11 counties throughout Tennessee.

Other early settlers were just as zealous in building a new county government, but they did not have as much time as did Taylor and Wilson. Reed helped, but his farm and community took much of his time. David and Zaccheus Wilson soon joined Samuel in Henderson County and settled north of what is now Wildersville. There they shared their previous experiences in local government. Another Wilson brother originally settled near what is now Sand Ridge, found locating water difficult, then moved further west to a prong of Forked Deer River. He became the ancestor of many Wilsons in that part of the county.

A majority of area settlers were from Middle and East Tennessee and North Carolina. These pioneers were of stern character, the majority being Scotch-Irish Presbyterians. Few settlers came from Alabama, Virginia, South Carolina, Kentucky, and Pennsylvania. Some traveled by land, driving their flocks and hauling their few household goods by wagon or pack horses; some came by water down the Tennessee River, stopping at favorite landing places, usually at the mouth of a creek or small river.

In 1819 and 1820, as soon as it became known that the Chickasaws had ceded all West Tennessee lands to the United States, settlers entered the county regularly. Shortly after Wilson and Taylor settled at what is now Lexington, Dr. John A. Wilson settled near there, becoming the first doctor and first professional man to settle in the county. He also became the first merchant, fur buyer, and county court clerk, and he operated a farm with the help of slaves. Wilson trained two female slaves to serve as mid-wives. His fee for a house call was 50 cents regard-



less of the distance and time of day. Payments were made in anything salable, such as beaver or fox skins, beeswax, tallow, or produce. In 1824, a Dr. S. Pierce also settled in Lexington and began an active practice. In 1827, a Dr. Miller also opened his office in Lexington; however, the 1830 census did not show his living in the county.

Major John T. Harmon settled near the headwaters of Big Sandy. He had served under General Andrew Jackson in the Creek War and at the Battle of New Orleans. Early in 1820 Thomas Hamilton settled at what was later known as Pleasant Exchange; records indicate that he was its first settler. He was soon followed by William Cain and George Powers.

John Purdy settled between Jack's Creek and Mifflin. He was a deputy surveyor, helping settlers locate their land properly; later he founded the town of Purdy which was the first seat of McNairy County. He surveyed what is known as the Lexington–Purdy Road, now Highway 22A. James Baker, his family, and five slaves settled eight miles northeast of Lexington. William Dismuke and his family of seven settled on the north fork of Forked Deer River, about two miles northwest of Poplar Springs. Two families of Shackelfords settled in the northern part of the county, but one family soon moved near Haley's Creek.

The Bingham, Brigance, and McClure families settled in the south part of the county near the Hardin County line. The Trices and their slaves settled east of what is now Crucifer and near what is known as Timberlake. Settlers locating on Browns Creek included Matthew Lewis, soon followed by Asa Davis; Josiah Reagan near Reagan, which was probably named for him; Levi Truett in the community that took his name; Abraham Derryberry, ancestor of that prominent family, in the eastern part of the county; Nixon Walker near Old Lone Elm; John Myracle at Big Sandy near Wildersville; Absolum Brooks near Lexington; Joseph Smith and his three slaves four miles south of Lexington; John and Gilbert Blankenship near Oak Grove Community; John and Jerry Crook at Middle Fork Community; and William Cawthorn and family with their eight slaves near Mifflin. The most populated early settlements were Beech River,

Browns Creek, Christian Chapel, Cross Plains (now Crucifer), Independence, Jack's Creek, Lexington, Middlefork, Middleton Creek, Mifflin, Pleasant Exchange, Prospect, and Reagan.

Others who settled in the area before it became a county were William Adcox, John Bray, Midget and Gregory Brooks, William Brooks, Leander Brower, John Carnall, John Carver, Silas Clark, James and Thomas Emerson, Cason Gilliam, Solomon Gilliam, J. J. Hill, Jeremiah Ingrahan, G. Kerherdon, Donald Kizer, Jack Little, William McDaniel, John Melton, Thomas Mitchell, T. C. Muse, Webb Phillips, Job Philpot, Allen Pollock, Barton and Charles Pope, Calied Rice and wife with nine children, Martha Roberts with five children, John N. Steele with four slaves, John Stewart, Lemuel Stratton, E. H. Tarrant, Richard Thomas, Jacob Tomlin, John Tubbs, Phillip Walker, Henry West, Ben White, William Wilkerson, and Caleb Wood.

The exact population of Henderson County at the time of its creation is unknown since the federal census had been the year before the county's creation. Estimated county population in 1821 ranged from 1500 to 2500. The first federal census of the county in 1830 showed a population of 8741, of which 1442 were slaves and five were freedmen. There were fewer than 1000 slave owners. The first ten years of the county represented the fastest growing period in its history. By 1840, the population had grown to 11,875 and by 1850 to 13,164.

Pioneer parents, strongly believing in the work ethic, taught their children at home until schools were established. The work day started early and lasted well into the evening hours. They slept well on crude beds of straw or bear hide on dirt floors or, if the house had a floor, on beds made by driving pegs into the walls. All cooking was done in a fireplace, since it was 60 years later before cooking stoves were introduced into the county. Knives, forks, and spoons used for eating were frequently made of wood. Oxen, mules, and horses were the usual beasts of burden. Some families had milk cows. All stock had to be guarded from wild beasts. Corn and vegetables were the principal crops, and some cotton was grown.

## The First Decades of A New County

On November 7, 1821, the state of Tennessee created by a single act four counties—Henry, Carroll, Madison, and Henderson. Signed by Governor William Carroll, the act to establish the new counties in West Tennessee contained 13 sections, nine of which dealt with Henderson County. Some of the provisions that determined whether a new county could be created included at least 625 square miles and a petition signed by 200 free male inhabitants for submission to the General Assembly. Henderson County had approximately 700 square miles and 235 signatures on its petition. Among the first to sign the petition were Absolum Brooks, John Bray, John Carnall, Asa Davis, William Dismuke, John T. Harmon, Jeremiah Ingrahan, George Powers, Joseph Smith, Abner Taylor, Philip Walker, John A. Wilson, and Samuel and David Wilson.

Henderson County was named for Colonel James Henderson, who commanded Tennessee troops at the Battle of New Orleans. He also was on General Jackson's staff during both the Creek and Natchez campaigns. Major John Harmon served under Henderson and in all probability influenced other leaders in naming the county for his commander. Colonel Henderson's military record was outstanding; he was called a soldier's soldier because of his uncompromising patriotism and loyalty to both his superiors and men.

Henderson and the other three counties created at the same time were placed under the jurisdiction of Stewart County, until each county had organized properly to meet the requirements. It was a long way to Dover, seat of Stewart County, across the Tennessee River and not far from the Kentucky line, where items such as marriage licenses and taxes had to be paid. Consequently, the four counties moved with full speed to organize their governments.

### *County Seat*

The Legislature appointed Sterling Brewer, James Fentress, and Abram Maury to select a site and a name for the seat of

Henderson County. The site chosen was near the county's center, close to Wilson Spring Branch, and was named Lexington in honor of Lexington, Massachusetts, where the first battle of the Revolutionary War was fought. The commissioners appointed J. J. Hill, Job Philpot, James Purdy, and Abner Taylor as the governing body of Lexington. Taylor was elected chairman. Samuel Wilson sold the 63-acre site, which was surveyed by John Harmon, to the commissioners on April 12, 1822. The four-acre public square was reserved in the center of the site for a courthouse, stocks, and jail. Lots were laid off in rows around the square beginning at the northeast corner and numbered consecutively, resulting in a total of 104 lots. Wilson reserved lot number 20 for himself since his own log house was already built on it. A lot was reserved for each commissioner. As reported by John Stewart and Micajah Bullock, the first purchasers of lots were John Brooks, William Edwards, John A. Green, James Jordan, William Stoddert, Samuel G. Tate, Daniel Thomas, John Wilson, Samuel Wilson, and James Wright. The first lots were sold at auction with Robert Marshall who received \$50 for his services as auctioneer.

The exact date the lots were sold is unknown, but it occurred between August 14 and September 1, 1822. The commissioners did not receive full possession of the acreage until August 14, and some work was begun by the first of September. The entire sale amounted to \$6285.40. The expenses, which totaled \$5483, included the sale of surety and public buildings "with certain incidentals" which were not recorded. Full possession of the land was not obtained until August.

Immediately after the sale of the lots, the first courthouse was built, perhaps as early as September of 1822. It was a one-story log structure that cost \$142 to build. Prior to the building of the courthouse, all county and town meetings were held at the home of Samuel Wilson. Because the first courthouse was too small, a brick courthouse was constructed in 1827 by Wilson at a cost of \$587.97. This two-story building served the county's needs until 1863 when it was destroyed by fire.

The court square at Lexington is perhaps the only county seat courthouse in the United States that is laid out crossways. The north corner of the courthouse and court square point toward the United Methodist Church, the south corner toward Natchez Trace Street between the Princess Theater and Stewart's Drug Store, the west corner toward the First National Bank, and the east corner toward the telephone office. There are no north, south, east, or west doors in the courthouse. A map is inlaid in the center of the first floor of the courthouse.

The first county jail was a small log structure with one main room and a side room, built near the courthouse for a cost of \$83. Years later, a brick jail was constructed on Purdy Street, now Monroe. The site is the parking lot now used by Pafford Funeral Home.

The first county offices were county and circuit court clerks, sheriff, and county register; these were the only offices provided for in the state constitution. The Legislature could and did create other county offices when deemed necessary. Later the offices of trustee, tax assessor, chancery court clerk, and superintendent of schools were created.

G. H. Buck, sheriff from 1846 to 1850, was a strict law enforcer and religious man who saw that no religious meeting was disturbed. It was said that he arrested seven people who were creating a disturbance one night at Mifflin and made them walk 15 miles to Lexington while he rode his horse behind them. Evidently the walk to jail deterred further interest in creating disturbances.

Lexington grew fast during the decade following its founding in 1822, at which time its population was estimated at 40. By 1830 it had increased to 260, and the city had two inns, one harness shop, one blacksmith shop, three saloons, three general stores, two churches, one wagon shop, one livery stable, and 42 dwelling houses. About the time that Dr. Brown established his store and office, John Greer built a store and saloon that occupied the same building. Lexington was incorporated in 1824 and operated under this charter for 50 years. Most merchandise was

hauled by wagon from Perryville or Brodie's Landing on the Tennessee River; some came from Saltillo. It usually took three days for a wagon to make a round trip.

During this period the Lexington–Clifton Road was built by way of Scotts Hill. Taking the contract to construct the road were William White and Milt Buck. Together with slaves, they felled trees and cleared the right-of-way for the road. They did not grade or plow the road. Stumps were cut low, and the road was rough. The Clifton Road then became the most used road to the Tennessee River.

### *Pleasant Exchange*

The settlers of Pleasant Exchange built a brick schoolhouse in 1822, known as the “college.” It was possibly the first brick building in Henderson County. H. J. Bolen, in his *Henderson County's History*, gives the following account of Pleasant Exchange:

William D. Carrington established a business at Old Pleasant Exchange about 1824. He built the first hotel or inn, perhaps that was built in the county. He bought his goods or merchandise out of New Orleans and had them shipped to a point on the Tennessee River, since called Brodie's Landing. A little later two men named Philpot and Fairbanks came and bought up a large tract of land and built a mill on Dabbs Creek, since known as Philpot's mill. They also established a distillery that ran full time the entire year. At one time there were three stores, three saloons, one tailor shop, one blacksmith shop and two shoe shops. . . . Pleasant Exchange up to the Civil War was a noted resort for horse racing and gambling. But after the war it ceased to exist as a town. . . .

The Leslie family, relatives of Andrew Jackson, moved to Pleasant Exchange in the early 1820s. During Jackson's business trips to West Tennessee, he reportedly spent several nights with the Leslies. It was also said that he raced horses at Pleasant Exchange. The remains of the school building and race track are on the land now owned by Claude Roberts.

A powder mill operated in the community before and pos-

sibly during the Civil War. Veterans and local residents have said that General Forrest replenished his army with powder from the mill prior to the Battle of Parker's Crossroads.

### *Mifflin*

By the end of 1831, Mifflin, a fast growing village in the west part of the county between Jackson and Lexington, had a population of 138. Many farmers were wealthy slave owners. The town contained one horse-powered cotton gin, grist mill, blacksmith shop, wagon shop, harness shop, and two stores and saloons. Wagons carrying merchandise from Lexington to Jackson usually stopped at a local inn. There were two churches, one a Primitive Baptist and the other a Missionary Baptist. Prominent early families were the Reids, Teagues, Hendrixes, Joneses, Butlers, Alexanders, and Browns.

### *Politics and Government*

The first national election in which residents voted was in 1824. General Jackson, John Quincy Adams, Crawford of Georgia, and Clay of Kentucky were candidates for president. Although Henderson County gave a majority of its vote to Jackson, no candidate received an electoral majority, and the election was thrown into the U.S. House of Representatives where Adams was chosen.

In the Legislature, the county was represented in both the House and Senate by the same men who represented Stewart County. In the election of 1823, Henry Hill Brown from the county was elected to the Senate and served the counties of Henderson, Carroll, Henry, Humphreys, Perry, and Stewart. It was certainly a compliment to a new county to elect one of its citizens the first time such an election was held.

David Crockett probably had more influence on the political thinking and public opinion of early Henderson County than any other person. As a frontiersman, soldier, politician, hunter, and raconteur, he had few equals. While living in the Reelfoot Lake area, Crockett was elected to the Legislature in 1823. He represented the district that included Henderson County, and,

during his unsuccessful attempt for the U.S. House of Representatives, he carried the county.

During his years in office, Crockett maintained loyal followers in the county, and, as a result of his fight against Jackson and the Democratic party, the majority of residents became Whigs. An example of this is shown in the election of 1836 when the Jackson candidate for president, Martin Van Buren, received 81 votes in the county and the Whig candidate 831. In 1840, Van Buren received 277 votes and Harrison 1318.

As early as 1830, there existed some sentiment for changing the state constitution. Governor Carroll advocated a revision or a completely new constitution. John Purdy was elected to represent the county at the Constitutional Convention of 1834. The constitution adopted that year provided that all counties would be divided into districts with two magistrates and a constable elected from each district and an additional magistrate elected from the county seat. *The Nashville Whig*, a leading party newspaper, furnished the following brief biography on the local delegate: "John Purdy, Resident Henderson County, born April 16, 1798, in Millin County, Pennsylvania. Emigrated to Tennessee in 1819. Occupation: farmer." In the commission meeting at Mifflin on January 7, 1836, the county was divided into 15 districts. The names Ross Ferry, Patton's Ferry, Reynoldsville, Shannonville, and Natchez were used frequently in the location of various district lines.

The leading Whig speaker and campaigner in Henderson County was Crockett's close friend Christopher H. Williams of Lexington, who served in the U.S. House of Representatives in the 25th, 31st, and 32nd Congresses. Williams was a man of party influence not only in Tennessee, but also nationally, and obtained a national reputation as a speaker.

Williams assumed a lead in a rally held at Lexington for William Harrison during his presidential campaign. A wagon, with a miniature log cabin placed between two kegs of cider mounted on it, was paraded on what is now Main Street and around court square. Other wagons followed, also with plentiful "hard" cider. Each wagon boasted signs which read: "Cider free



to all Harrison men." The free cider increased the number of Harrison supporters. Great excitement filled the crowds, estimated from 1000 to 5000 people.

During the gubernatorial campaign of 1841 between James K. Polk and James C. "Lean Jimmy" Jones, the county was visited by Polk and 74-year old Jackson. Polk and Jackson arrived at Lexington before dark on October 6, 1844, and went immediately to a hotel, later known as the Lawler home. Tired, both men retired early. During the night some "devilish Whigs" were accused of putting a Whig flag on the window of the room where Polk and Jackson slept.

The next day Jackson spoke to a large crowd which, although strongly Whig, treated Jackson courteously. Polk followed with a speech that did not criticize Jones as bitterly as had been done at other places, nor did he lash out at the Whig party.

In spite of Jackson's efforts, Jones was elected governor, with Henderson County providing its usual Whig majority. Two years later both candidates met again with the same results; within two more years, Polk was in the White House.

### *Wars*

In 1836, there was a false war scare that called Tennessee volunteers to defend the country's borders. The Henderson County volunteers were placed under the command of Captain Nicholas H. Darnell. For an unknown reason, Captain Darnell's company and that of a Captain Totten from Carroll County failed to attend a rendezvous at Jackson and were then ordered to rendezvous at Fayetteville. Governor Cannon reported the event to the Legislature as follows:

The companies of Captain Darnell of Henderson County, Captain Totten of Carroll County, Captain Lauderdale of Sumner County and Captain Curry of Weakley County also attended the rendezvous at Fayetteville, but were all reported too late and consequently could not be received into the service. They encountered the sacrifices and expenses of going there and returning to their homes. Twenty companies were received and organized in accordance with the laws of the state, into a

brigade under my orders to report to General Armstrong. The estimated number was 1550 at Fayetteville. Total of all companies was 106 containing 8685 volunteers.

The entire operation was cancelled as suddenly as it was mobilized. All volunteers were discharged with pay, except those companies that had been late which included that of Henderson County.

In 1848, a war developed between Mexico and the United States concerning the boundary between the two countries. President Polk called for volunteers, and Governor Aaron V. Brown issued a call for 2600 volunteers. Thirty-thousand men volunteered, providing Tennessee with the name Volunteer State. It is estimated that 250 county men were among these volunteers.

### *Religion*

The Reverend John Carrant, a Cumberland Presbyterian minister, is thought to have been the first recorded ordained minister. Traveling on horseback, he preached in homes and under brush arbors. Other early ministers in Henderson County were John Darnett and John Barrett, also Cumberland Presbyterians. Methodists soon followed with much enthusiasm, winning many converts. The Missionary Baptists, Free Will Baptists, and Primitive Baptists came next.

Among the first organized churches were a Baptist church in 1827, at what is now known as Old Jack's Creek, and a Primitive Baptist church, organized at Mud Creek near the Carroll County line in 1830. A community building was constructed near the present Beech River cemetery between 1825 and 1830, and all denominations worshipped there.

In 1824, G. H. Buck, a devout Cumberland Presbyterian leader, settled on what is known as the Odell Buck farm. Through Buck's efforts, the Mt. Gilead Church near Shady Hill was organized in 1826. It is still an active church although the membership has dwindled. Buck helped to organize revivals in various parts of the county which led to the establishment of other churches.

Palestine Cumberland Presbyterian Church was organized in 1837 or 1838 but did not affiliate with the presbytery for several years. The Reverend Henry Wadley was instrumental in the organization of the church and was its first pastor. A dedicated man, he died in the pulpit of this church and was buried in its cemetery. On his tombstone is inscribed, "Died In The Service." Other leaders of this church were Elias Stewart, his sons, and J. L. and S. E. Britt. A few years later, Big Springs Cumberland Presbyterian Church was organized only three miles northwest of Palestine. The McAdamses and Wallaces were the leading families in its organization.

Among Methodist ministers preaching in the county were the Reverends Renshaw, J. Kelly, and R. S. Swift; no official records verify the presence of others. The first Methodist church was built near the mouth of Olive Branch in the northern part of the county. This log church was constructed on a two-acre lot deeded by Solomon Milam to Ramson Cunningham, John Cooper, James Hart, and Thomas Johnson on July 9, 1832. Early members of this group, as recorded in 1887 by the Weston A. Goodspeed Company, were Elizabeth Ewing, who joined at Knoxville in 1824 and later moved to Lexington, joining the church there; R. B. Jones in 1839 with Renshaw; Mrs. A. A. Warren in 1838 with J. Kelly; and Bettie Bell and E. E. Smith with Swift in 1840.

Shady Grove was another of the early Methodist churches. It was established between 1835 and 1840 and was a well-known campground. Among those connected with this church were the Cogdills, Corbets, Hamlets, Hunts, Renshaws, Sherwoods, and Youngs. Methodist churches were also established at Holly Springs in 1845, New Prospect in 1850, and Bethel at about the same time.

The first Missionary Baptist church was built in Lexington in 1847; however, an organized membership existed as early as 1842. The exact location of this church is unknown; according to papers kept by the late Will Lawler, it was possibly near the current site of Jones Machine Shop. The first church structure stood until the Civil War, when by "neglect it fell into decay." In

1880, a lot was purchased from J. S. Fielder, and a brick building was erected.

A Baptist church was built at Chapel Hill in 1846 when the community was thriving with a post office, two stores, a blacksmith shop, a gin, and a saloon. A Missionary Baptist church was built at Hepzibah in 1847, at Ridge Grove in 1842, and at Union in 1842. The Union Church was originally erected as a place of worship for any denomination, hence the name, Union. Soon thereafter, it became a Missionary Baptist church and over the years has grown into an outstanding rural church.

### *Agriculture*

The first plows used in Henderson County were wooden and only scratched the surface; however, this was all that was needed in the county's rich topsoil. Iron points used on turning plows came into use about 1829 and became popular as they increased the furrow depth. A larger, wooden wing could be added to the plow above the point. Section harrows were made by placing wooden pegs through holes in split logs and were used to pulverize soil. The wood beam shovel plow and the wood beam turning plow were the main farm equipment with the exception of the hoe, which was used constantly in the cultivation of cotton and corn. Without the use of the hoe, grass would have damaged or ruined the crops. Hoes also were used to thin cotton.

Principal garden crops were corn, beans, whippoorwill peas, onions, Irish potatoes, sweet potatoes, turnips, turnip greens, squash, cabbage, and carrots. Before sugar became available, wild honey was used as a sweetener. Some early farmers made beehives, captured bees, and produced honey.

Some corn was used to make whiskey, and local distilleries provided a market for the surplus corn. During the 1820s there were distilleries at Independence, Jack's Creek, Lexington, Mifflin, and Pleasant Exchange with local saloons providing waiting markets.

Homemade drum planters were being used for cotton by 1850. A wooden drum with holes one and one-half inches in

diameter, four inches apart, dropped the cotton seed into small furrows made by the plow in front of the drum and attached to the same wooden frame as the drum. A small drag or roller was attached behind the drum to cover the seed. Such a planter was crude and heavy, but it planted cotton.

By mid-1840 cotton was king in Henderson County. An estimated 13,000 bales were produced in 1850 and sold at four and one-half cents per pound (seed cotton). Approximately 1500 pounds of seed cotton yielded a bale of lint cotton, and an average of three acres yielded one bale. A farmer who could produce one-half bale per acre was considered to be a "real" farmer and one who owned "mighty rich land."

Swine production supplanted wild game for the farmer's meat supply. Hogs were allowed to run wild, subsisting on nuts and roots. Each fall the farmer put in a pen those hogs planned for slaughter. They were corn fed until the weather was considered right for slaughter. A hog usually had to be two years of age to be large enough for slaughter. Hog killing day was a festive occasion when farmers helped their neighbors.

Trapping was an additional source of food for the farmer. During the winter, furs were prime; beaver, mink, muskrat, and raccoon furs commanded good prices. Wild pigeons were plentiful during the migration period, and their flesh was considered a delicacy.

Although farm tools were crude compared to modern equipment, Henderson County produced such outstanding farmers as John Anderson and his son Jack of Poplar Springs; John W. Cawthorn of Mifflin who had 1000 acres and more than 30 slaves; Columbus Davis of Browns Creek noted for fine livestock, excellent corn and wheat, and soil conservation practices; John Gray in Lone Elm Community; Ransom Cunningham and his son, A. B., who owned over a 1000 acres, noted for cotton, near the Sand Ridge Community; Moses Diffie, a cotton grower of White Fern Community, with 450 acres, fine livestock and pastures; Thomas M. Dodds in what is now Chester County, an outstanding farmer who owned several slaves; Joshua Foster,



The home of Henry M. Powers, built in 1845, has been occupied ever since. Powers, a Union soldier, was imprisoned at Andersonville Prison in Georgia during the Civil War.

a successful farmer who later moved to Arkansas and then to Texas; and Ephriam Fuller, near Lexington who accumulated more than 1000 acres.

M. J. Galloway, a good farmer, who first lived in various sections of the county, was also a school teacher, a member of the Legislature, and served as steward of the county poor farm. William B. Hall, who lived in the 3rd civil district, in addition to being a successful farmer, served as sheriff and as a member of the Legislature. William Howard settled approximately four miles east of Lexington in 1825 and was known as an agriculturist before coming to the county. He owned over 1000 acres of land and 35 slaves. Edmond Knowles settled six miles west of Lexington in 1824 and became one of the most prosperous farmers in the early history of the county, owning at one time over 3000 acres and some slaves. His farm had cattle, sheep, hogs, mules, horses, chickens, geese, turkeys, and guineas. Andrew McCall, Sr., settled east of where Chesterfield is located and purchased 300 acres.

W. C. McHaney developed a western portion of the county and immediately became prosperous as a farmer, merchant, and community leader, owning over 1000 acres. His brother, Lafayette F., owned 800 acres in the same community and later served in the Legislature and as deputy sheriff. Peter Pearson, political leader, owned 808 acres that were considered to be a model farm. Pearson became a member of the Henderson County Court and the Legislature. Shadrach Pearson located north of Lexington in 1836 on 200 acres of land that produced above average crops; in 1848 he moved to Carroll County. Benjamin Smith, whose farm was considered model, moved to the 6th civil district in 1827 but later relocated in the 11th district. His two sons, T. A. and John A., were also considered good farmers and political leaders. John owned over 700 acres of well-cultivated land.

#### *Economy, Industry, and Business*

According to the *Goodspeed* history the first mill built in the county was constructed in 1821 on Mud Creek by John and William Bringham and was evidently used to crush corn into meal and wheat into flour. Primitive hand mills were also used to crush grain. Another mill was built later on the north fork of Forked Deer River. During the summer of 1822, a mill powered by horses was constructed on what is now known as the Old Lexington and Trenton Road.

The first cotton gin was built in 1823 and was located on Beech River near Lexington. Several mills were built between 1823 and 1830: Shackleford's mill, five miles east of Lexington on Haley's Creek; McGee's mill, the forerunner of McHaney mill, on Beech River; and Trice's mill near the same vicinity. McClure's cotton gin also was built during this period, but its exact location is unknown. In 1830 or 1831, a gin and mill were built on what is known as the Buckley farm, located south of Luray where cotton was sold in seed.

A cotton mill was established in Lexington between 1835-1840, probably located across from the home of Samuel Wilson. Lint cotton was purchased at the gin and made into thread and

cloth. As many as 20 people reportedly worked there at one time, receiving \$2 a week in wages. At one time, R. W. Hall, who had some connection with the mill, was the payor.

The economy of Henderson County in 1831 through 1851 was sound with 12 cotton gins operating. By 1850, the gins were converted to steam power, except for Harmon's gin on Beech River and Shackelford's gin and mill on Haley's Creek. These gins had no suctions and were fed by hand.

Grist and wheat mills were located in every community. Some were operated by horse power, others by water power. Some, such as the Harmon, Shackelford, and McHaney mills, were operated in conjunction with cotton gins. Thomas Barrow operated a mill in the Smith Schoolhouse Community. Area millers included William Gately at Mt. Gilead; William Foster in the east part of the county; Andrew Davidson in what is now Shady Hill Community; William Collins in Reagan Community; David Sparks at an unknown site; Martin Douglass at Jack's Creek Community; Alcy Hamilton and Thomas Brown in the 15th civil district; and William Leonard in northeast Henderson County.

According to the 1850 census there were 29 blacksmiths in the county: J. H. Alexander, Thomas Arnold, Pleasant Austin, James and John Bennett, G. B. Birmingham, Henry Blankenship, Abner Brown, Wiley Carrington, Henry Goodman, William Hefley, John B. and David Kizer, Carter Madison, Francis McAlister, John McCall, John McCarroll, John McGuire, Robert Moffitt, Joseph Moore, John Pursser, William Read, Absolum Reding, Andrew Selzer, William Shaw, David Spain, John Tull, Gordon Webb, and James Williams. Blacksmiths were essential to the economy of the county until motor-driven farm equipment replaced mules and horses. The blacksmiths shod horses and mules, sharpened plow points, set wagon tires, and repaired and made all kinds of farm equipment. Frequently they served as veterinarians.

The census included the following wagoners: Duncan McMiller, John A. Montgomery, and Bridges White of the



southern county; Joseph Coleman of Crucifer Community; William S. Dollar of Independence Community; Caleb Woods of Pleasant Exchange; Joseph Pike of Jack's Creek; and Charles Roberts of Wildersville Community.

The same census also indicated that the county was one of the largest manufacturers of pottery in the state. Eight heads of families listed their occupation as "potters." Only White and Green counties had more potters listed. Mark Mooney operated a kiln in the 13th district from 1850 to 1880. According to members of his family, Mooney primarily made salt glazed stoneware like grease lamps, dishes, churns, and pitchers. A pottery located in Lexington, possibly operated by Alex W. Fesmire and Thomas Craven, specialized in making quality whiskey jugs that were shipped to distilleries in Kentucky and Ohio. Engravings on these jugs read, "Made in Lexington, Tennessee, by Lexington Pottery Works."

Thomas Craven, grandson of the famous Randolph County, North Carolina, potter Peter Craven, his sons—John M., Tinsley W., and William—moved to Henderson County between 1829 and 1830 and began the family's prominent pottery businesses. Tinsley's sons, Malcolm M. and Thomas E., later joined the family tradition. The Cravens operated kilns in several county districts through the 1880s. Research has indicated that one of the Cravens operated near the confluence of Black Bottom and the Beech River. Pieces of pottery and ruins of the kiln were present until the headwaters of Beech Lake covered most of the site.

Several tanneries existed in 1850. Due to the bad odors produced by tanneries, they were located at distances from dwelling houses. Operators of area tanneries included William Houston near Middleburg Community, Elias Stewart and sons in Palestine Community, and Asa M. Wilson at Pleasant Exchange and Wildersville. There were also tanneries at Mifflin and Jack's Creek; however, their owners or operators are unknown.

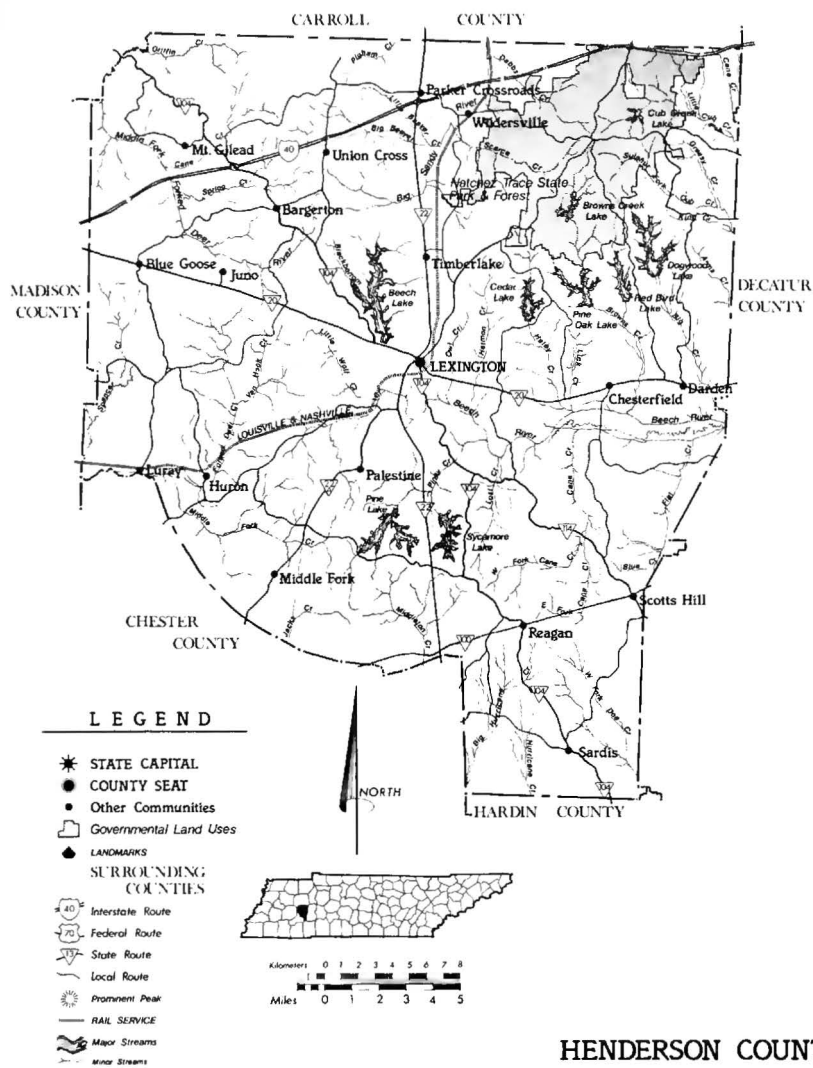
Shoemakers traveled through the communities once each

year to make shoes for various families; David D. Strain and Jeremiah Grisson were near Lexington and Robert Kizer at Wildersville. Saddlers who owned their own shops or repaired saddles in the county were George Bird, Addison Hall, Felix Henry, and Thomas Roach at or near Lexington; Cyrus Wilson at Pleasant Exchange; and John Littell in the southern part of the county. Area gunsmiths who made or repaired muzzle-loading muskets were Christopher Stutts, who lived in the Lexington area, and J. W. Teague in the west part of the county.

Thomas Bartholomew, R. T. Fringer, William Hill, Edmund Lessenberry, Harrison McClamock, Ralph Mason, James Napier, Thomas P. Oliver, John Tillmore, and Andrew Scott were carpenters. Calvin Webb was cited as both a carpenter and a cabinetmaker, while Isaac Baskins, W. W. Derryberry, and George B. Gilliam were listed as cabinetmakers. Other businessmen cited were W. T. Edwards and D. J. Birmingham, carriage makers; John W. Hawks, brickmason; Ivan Smith of Lexington, a hatter; Moses Christenberry, a painter; and James Ford Mifflin, a ditcher.

R. W. Hall was the town banker at Lexington and received money for safekeeping in his iron vault. Money deposited into savings accounts was carried by Hall or his employees to Jackson, where it was deposited into another savings account.

As the county developed, its citizens began to improve their houses and life-styles. The more wealthy citizens, especially the slave owners, began to build frame houses by 1840. Crude saw-mills provided lumber dressed by hand, and merchants stocked paint and square nails by 1845. Most frame houses were painted white. Candles furnished the light, and candle holders came in all shades, colors, and sizes. The coal oil lamp was used later. Although cloth could be purchased at stores, most families still depended on the spinning wheel or home loom for making cloth. Ready-made clothing and sewing machines were extremely rare. Howe invented the sewing machine in 1844-1845, but there is no record of any being in use in the county until after 1875.



SOURCE: Tennessee Department of Transportation.

*Travel and Transportation*

As the population increased in Henderson County, it became necessary to construct better roads. All roads were dirt, and the most frequently traveled were those from Lexington to Clifton, Trenton, Jackson through Crucifer and Mifflin, and Huntingdon. By 1840, the Lexington and Purdy Road also became well traveled. Road improvements made travel easier and increased the hauling of cotton by wagons and carts to Perryville, Clifton, Saltillo, and Brodie's Landing, where the cotton was loaded on boats and shipped to Paducah, Memphis, or New Orleans. These improvements also led to the use of the stagecoach, which in turn encouraged the development of inns.

The first stagecoach to serve Henderson County was the Lexington and Clifton Stage that traveled by way of Scotts Hill and Bath Springs. A small inn was built at Scotts Hill to take care of the travelers. The stage made the entire trip from Lexington to Clifton in one day and returned the next. Later, this route was extended to Jackson. In 1850, I. W. Norweed advertised a reduced round-trip fare from Jackson to Nashville for \$16 or a one-way fare for \$9 via Lexington, Scotts Hill, Clifton, Waynesboro, and Columbia in 34 hours. The advertisement concluded with the following sentence: "This line is now successful, being stocked with new four-horse tray, superior teams, and careful sober drivers." The Jackson Hotel sold tickets for this trip.

About 1845, the Lexington to Perryville stage was established with stops at a settlement where Beacon is now located and at Lone Elm. Passengers who traveled the Tennessee River found this to be an improvement. Mail service from the East was reduced from a month to a week or ten days. Stages continued to operate between Jackson and Lexington even after Jackson had the benefit of a railroad, some 35 years before Henderson County had one.

Railroad fever invaded West Tennessee around 1835. Forked Deer River was navigable to Jackson, and Hatchie River was navigable as far as Bolivar only part of each year. Consequently, there was a large territory existing between the Tennessee and Mississippi rivers without the benefit of transportation.

The transportation of merchandise was essential to the development of such counties as Henderson, Carroll, and Madison.

The impetus for a railroad was taken by energetic businessmen, farmers, and professional men from Jackson. In 1833, they succeeded in obtaining the Western Railroad charter, the purpose being to build a railroad from Jackson to the Mississippi River by the most practical route. The state appropriated \$500 to survey a route. In October of 1837, the state's chief engineer, Albert Miller Lee, made a report known as the Forked Deer Valley Railroad Proposal to Governor Cannon recommending a route from Ashport to Fulton on the Mississippi River, to Perryville on the Tennessee River. This route would have included Jackson and Lexington and would have accessed the entire Forked Deer Valley and Beech River Valley.

As a part of the overall project plan, the Legislature chartered the Tennessee and Jackson Railroad to build from Lexington to Perryville. Meetings were held in the courthouses of Bolivar, Jackson, and Nashville to discuss the building; one such meeting was held at Jack's Creek in Henderson County. The name of the company was changed to the Jackson and Mississippi Central.

Despite pleas for the road, the effort failed to subscribe the \$50,000 of stock necessary for the project, a situation pleasing to prominent businessmen from Nashville and Memphis. Fifty years later, the railroad was finally built from Jackson to Perryville. According to an eastern syndicate, it was the intention of the company to make Perryville "The Pittsburg of the South."

### *Education*

Henderson Countians have always been noted for their interest in education. Of the 235 men who signed the county's petition, all were educated and could sign their names. In addition to the schoolhouse at Pleasant Exchange, other buildings were constructed for worship and educational activities. Bobby Jones, who taught there for eight years, was known to be the first teacher.

In 1808, the U.S. Congress passed the Compact or General

Sessions Act which required states to provide 100,000 acres of land for two colleges in the state and 100,000 acres for an academy in each county. In 1838, the state set aside \$18,000 to help support each county's academy and \$100,000 to support public schools. The amount of funds actually received in Henderson County is unknown.

Subscription schools, those financed by payments made monthly by parents for students' tuition, existed in practically every county settlement. These schools operated from 60 days to six months, depending on locality, density of population, and the ability of subscribers to pay. Hours were from eight to four o'clock six days a week, and fees ran from 50 cents to \$1.50 a month. Special rates usually were given to families with more children. A letter in the files of the late Will Crook mentions such a subscription school located at Mifflin as early as 1822. John Purdy was instrumental in the organization of a good subscription school at Jack's Creek, now located in Chester County. In 1823, Hardy Birmingham organized and taught at a school in Lexington.

After these schools, the Lexington Academy was established in 1825. Its school term ranged from five to seven months each year. At the time of its organization, Purdy, John Harmon, James Haslett, Richard McCree, and J. W. Philpot were appointed academy trustees. The fact that these men lived in various sections of the county indicated that the school was intended to serve the entire county, as well as students who lived outside the county. In 1826, Harmon, Haslett, J. J. Hill, C. H. Miller, and Ruben Wilcox were authorized to organize a lottery to raise a sum not in excess of \$10,000 to be used for the academy. The trustees were to have perpetual succession until 1865. In 1827, M. B. Cook, C. M. Haskins, and Samuel Wilson also became trustees. The lottery resulted in the acquisition of a considerable amount of property, primarily located in or near Christmasville in Carroll County. No other results are known.

In 1832, the trustees sold a house and lot at Christmasville and purchased 50 acres at Brigance Creek from R. C. Blair for \$1500, 50 acres from S. B. Orton for \$440, another parcel for

\$1000, 220 acres from B. Gillespie for \$550, and 50 acres from S. M. Carson for \$1000. Thus, the academy appeared to be well financed. It is believed that two brick buildings, each with two rooms, were erected on the land purchased and that one was used as a dormitory. Richard Barham, Francis Ray, and George Stewart taught at the academy, and William Brooks served for a number of years as its headmaster.

An academy for females was established sometime between 1843 and 1847 with Helen J. Colburn of Fairfield, Vermont, as its head. Colburn later married Lexington attorney Willis G. Jones. The academy was located near the present J. T. "Gaggy" Stewart home. An advertisement in an early Jackson paper stated that English, Latin, and French were taught. The academy operated successfully until it burned during the Civil War. From 1830 until the Civil War, Lexington could have been considered an educational center with the Lexington Academy, Colburn's Female Academy, and two elementary subscription schools located there.

By 1850, almost every community in Henderson County had access to a school. Outside of Lexington and Mifflin, all schools were subscription and consisted of log buildings. Salaries for teachers ranged from \$10 to \$25 per month, and there were no regulations concerning teacher qualifications. Teachers living outside the community had to board with parents of the school children, frequently traveling from one family to the next.

### *Law and Lawyers*

The first circuit court was held at the land office of Samuel Wilson, before the courthouse was completed. Joshua Haskell was first circuit judge and served until 1838, when he was succeeded by John Read of Jackson. Governor Carroll named James Baker, John Crook, John Essary, John Halburton, Jerry Hendrix, Dewey Middleton, John Purdy, William Ray, Abner Taylor, John Wilkes, and Samuel Wilson as magistrates. Hendrix was chosen court chairman. One year later, Taylor replaced him.

The bar of Lexington and Henderson County has been

outstanding. In 1826, Micajah Bullock began practice in Lexington and gained prominence throughout the state. Bullock refused appointed offices but was elected to represent Henderson and several other counties in the Legislature from 1835 to 1837. Even after his move to Jackson about 1845 and his election to the House to represent Madison, Carroll, Gibson, and Henry counties, he still continued his Lexington practice. James A. Heawslet, William L. Petty, and H. H. Hopkins began practice in Lexington prior to 1835.

The Hawkins brothers, Alvin and Isaac, began their practice at Lexington. Although they never moved to Henderson County, they maintained an active practice. Alvin was elected governor in 1881, and Isaac became a colonel in the 7th Tennessee Cavalry Union Army during the Civil War, the Union outfit in which most Henderson Countians served.

Among other lawyers who lived and practiced in the county at this time were Albert Shrewsbury, who represented the county in the House for three terms and was a presidential elector on the Whig ticket of Winfield Scott and William A. Graham; Joseph Gillespie; Christopher Williams; Samuel McClanahan; J. C. Trotten; and James Scott. Milton Brown and Adam Huntsman from Jackson appeared frequently before the bar at Lexington as did William T. Haskell, the son of Judge Joshua Haskell. Young Haskell, a hero in the Mexican War, also represented his congressional district in the U.S. House for one term.

Haskell was also a nationally reputed orator. In the 1844 national campaign, he spoke for four hours to an estimated 20,000 people in Knoxville. Reportedly, not one person left. He was such an eloquent speaker that one reporter stated that women fainted and men shouted upon hearing Haskell. When he spoke on behalf of the Whig party to 5000 people at Jackson, C. H. Williams shared the speaker's platform with him.

When the Henderson County Courthouse was built, a whipping post was placed in the yard where men were whipped publicly. Each offender was tied to the post, stripped to the waist, and received ten to 30 lashes with a bull whip from the sheriff. The sentence for the first offense of public drunkenness was ten



lashes; second offense, 20 lashes; third offense, 30 lashes. There were few second offenders. The offender suffered physical torture as well as public derision. For nonsupport of his family, a man would receive 30 lashes in the presence of his family. If that was ineffective, he was placed in stocks for an indefinite time. The stocks consisted of a three-legged stool on which the offenders sat; in front of the stool was a five-foot by five-foot wooden wall with holes in which the arms and feet were locked. These methods of justice were obviously cheaper for taxpayers than that of maintaining a jail.

The jail was primarily used for criminals who had committed murder or theft valued at more than \$50. A person could be hanged for stealing either a horse or a mule. Drunkenness was a common offense since liquor was both cheap and legal. Saloons were located in every community, and many stores operated saloons in connection with their regular business.

One of the most exciting trials ever to occur in the county was in 1849—the *State of Tennessee* versus *Milton Reily*, for the murder of William “Bud” Willis. The killing occurred at Independence, a flourishing village, 12 miles northwest of Lexington, with two stores, two saloons, a post office, blacksmith shop, school, and a church. Community unrest forced a change of venue to Jackson. While in a drunken condition, Reiley confessed to the murder; however, when sober he denied to the last any connection with the murder. Despite his claim of innocence, Reily was convicted and sentenced to be hanged.

The hanging ground was located where U.S. Highway 70 crosses the Gulf, Mobile and Ohio Railroad tracks west of Jackson. Reily supposedly prayed for a miracle to save him, and ironically while he stood on the trap door waiting for the placement of the noose, a sudden storm fell with full fury. The large crowd that had assembled to witness the hanging fled. Throughout the storm, Reily stood on the trap door, perhaps believing his miracle had occurred, but the execution finally took place. Several years later, a man on his death bed in Obion County was said to have confessed to the crime, proving Reily’s innocence.

During the early 1830s, groups of criminals infested river

traffic and towns. Perryville, Brodie's Landing, and Clifton on the Tennessee River were victimized by such criminals. Other gangs operated on or near such major roads as the Natchez Trace. The Mason gang frequented this road, as did the notorious Harp brothers. Travelers and passengers of stagecoaches were their usual victims.

Perhaps the worst of these gangs was that of John A. Murrel. The gang's main headquarters was at Denmark in Madison County, and another was located in eastern Arkansas. Murrel first became famous as a land pirate with an organization that covered an area from west Kentucky to New Orleans. A man with polished manners, intelligent, and well-educated, he was born in Middle Tennessee.

Murrel was well versed in law and used that knowledge to his advantage. A student of the Bible and a pulpit orator, he frequently entered communities posing as an evangelist, won the confidence of the residents, and held revivals. The final night of each revival, while Murrel preached and admonished sinners to repentance, his gang would steal horses, slaves, and other valuables. Frequently, Murrel even took part in tracking the criminals, naturally steering the law and the owners from his gang and the "plunder." Palestine, Cross Plains, now Crucifer, White Fern, Mifflin, and Jack's Creek were communities victimized in this manner.

Following the robbery and murder of a traveler at Lexington, it was said that Virgil Stewart from Madison County began a hunt for Murrel and his gang. Stewart managed to gain the confidence of Murrel and joined his gang, visiting even the Arkansas headquarters said to be located under a cottonwood tree near the Mississippi River. Stewart learned of the gang's operations and reported them. Eventually, Murrel was tried and sentenced to prison, but only for stealing slaves. While in prison, Murrel wrote or caused to be written the details of his operations, claiming that he did not steal slaves for profit but carried them to freedom since he was an ardent abolitionist. He also claimed that Henderson County was a main line of the underground railroad. Five of his gang tried to take over Vicksburg,

Mississippi, on July 4, 1835, but were caught and hanged without a trial.

Chancery Court was organized on May 6, 1844. The first chancery district consisted of Henderson, Perry, and McNairy counties, and the first chancellor was Judge Andrew McCampbell, who served until 1848. J. W. G. Jones was the first clerk and master, continuing in that position until 1866.

### *Doctors and Medicine*

Doctors who established early practices in Lexington were Drs. R. A. Brown, Cochran, Pierce, Alfred W. Tabler, John West, John A. Wilson, and William W. Warren. Dr. John Parsons served the southeast part of the county that later became Decatur County, actually covering two counties. Dr. A. Middleton, an ancestor of the prominent family in Shady Hill, treated patients beginning in 1845 at the Shady Hill and Ebenezer communities. Dr. M. B. Outlaw attended the Cross Plains Community, and Dr. P. Mackey practiced in the eastern part of the county. Dr. Stephen Chopin practiced near Lexington, and Dr. A. D. McKainey practiced in what is now known as the Luray Community. Other physicians and the areas they served were Duke Williams, Palestine and Middlefork communities; William Brigance, Reagan and Hickory Flat; John W. Anthony, Mifflin and Jack's Creek; Charles W. Hays, Browns Creek Community; Thomas E. Jordan, Bargerton and Mt. Gilead communities; John Autry, Pleasant Exchange and Christian Chapel communities; and James Holland, also the first postmaster there, at Juno. In spite of the lack of formal medical training of early doctors, they were real pioneers. Drs. Brown, Cochran, and Outlaw were considered to be well-read for their day, and Outlaw was listed as both surgeon and physician.

During the mid-1800s, G. L. Laws came to the county from Carroll County and settled near Parker's Crossroads. He studied medicine under the guidance of Dr. Henry McCall of Clarksburg and continued his education through graduation by attending the medical department of Nashville University. Laws was one of the first practitioners to have a medical degree

in the county. Dr. William A. Warren was another physician with a medical degree who practiced in the county. He graduated from a medical college in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, in 1934, and began his practice in Lexington. Dr. Warren had a long and successful career and was well respected by all who knew him in the county.

### *Newspapers*

Early records name *The Lexington Eagle*, which began publication between 1829 and 1834, as one of the county's first newspapers. Its editor, owner, and publisher was W. W. Gales, who is said to have advocated the principles of the Whig party as propounded by Crockett so much that Democrats accused him of running a "Crockett paper." It appeared that Gales wrote more stinging editorials against Andrew Jackson and the Democrats than he published news. Soon after Crockett's defeat by Adam Huntsman, Gales folded his "Crockett tent" and moved to Jackson, where he stayed until the turn of the century. Gales was reported to have lived to be the oldest editor in West Tennessee.

The *Lexington Dispatch* was established later and was edited by H. C. Henry until the Civil War. The *Lexington Advance* was published by G. B. Davis, and later the *Advance News* was published by W. T. Hawkins. These early papers, of course, set type by hand, which was a slow process.

Local news and that obtained from Jackson was published even though it would be as much as two or three weeks old before the reader had an opportunity to read it. Subscriptions usually cost 50 cents a year; however, these were frequently paid by produce instead of money. A "coon skin" could equal one year's service. Red sassafras roots, beeswax, beef tallow, roasting ears of corn, poke salat, and sometimes, corn cobs were used.

### Uneasy Tranquility: 1850–1860

The decade before the Civil War was an uneasy one, and it became increasingly evident to the citizens of Henderson County that a clash over the question of slavery was inevitable. The

overwhelming majority of people living in the county were loyal to the Union, although some were slave owners.

The first slaves were brought into the county by Joseph Reed. Other early slave owners included James Arnold, Joseph Boswell, Willis Bridges, Absolum Brooks, Abner Brown, George Burns, John Carver, William Cawthorn, Jerry Crook, Brian Douglas, Peter Edwards, William B. Flake, Joshua Foster, M. J. Galloway, John Gray, Nathan Green, Andrew Griffin, Albert Hall, William Hams, John Harmon, Thomas Hart, William Howard, Joseph Hughes, Mark Jones, Thomas Johnson, Edmond Knowles, Robert Lowry, Cornelius McHaney, John Pearson, Benjamin Smith, Thomas Stanford, Jesse Taylor, J. W. Teague, Richard Timberlake, Stephen White, John A. Wilson, and J. B. Wilson. The assessor's report of 1839 showed 880 slaves owned by 120 citizens.

Dr. Robert Lowry owned more slaves than anyone else in the county and settled on what became known as the Lowry Plantation, five miles south of Scotts Hill. Hoad Lowry, one of the Lowry slaves, was 15 years old when the Civil War started and lived until 1932. According to him and to numerous other reports, Dr. Lowry had a reputation as a cruel master; however, Lowry was an exception locally in this regard, for there were many other owners who treated their slaves with kindness.

No records have indicated that any slave auctions occurred in Henderson County, and most slave trading was conducted among neighbors. Most transfers of slaves in the county were outright sales. Occasionally a representative of a company that dealt in buying and selling slaves came to the county to buy slaves. One agent who did this was Joseph Mason, an agent of the Memphis firm of Bradley Wilson. According to available records, Mason made only five purchases in the county.

County slave owners did not push the cause of slavery as did many of those in other sections. In many instances, there was a great deal of animosity between slave owners and nonslave owners. Such animosity was based more often on economic reasons than on principles. Nonslave owners usually owned and cultivated small hill farms, did their own work, and could not afford

slaves. Consequently, there sometimes existed an envious feeling toward slave owners; on the other hand, some slave owners viewed the small farmers as socially inferior.

### *Politics and Government*

The decade witnessed the last gasping breath of the Whig party. Since Henderson Countians had been strongly Whig supporters, the majority of voters were forced to find new political homes. Some reluctantly went to the Democratic party, but there was no stampede in that direction.

Two new political parties were spurred into being—the American Know–Nothing party and the Republican party. The Know–Nothing party became national in its scope during the 1850s. It sprang from the outgrowth of a secret society called the Supreme Order of the Star Spangled Banner, which appealed to voters based on its secrecy, mystery, and on prejudices against Catholics and foreigners. In 1855, Meredith P. Gentry ran for governor with that party's support, being barely defeated by Andrew Johnson who was running for reelection. The vote in Henderson County for Gentry was 1230 to 734 for Johnson; the majority of voters opposed the Democratic party to the extent they voted for a candidate backed by an organization based on prejudices.

The Republican party consisted of antislave Whigs and those disgruntled voters who would not vote the Democratic ticket. The new party took a definite stand on the issues of the day, opposing the extension of slavery and advocating the repeal of the Kansas–Nebraska Act and the Fugitive Slave Law.

In the presidential elections of 1852, the Democratic nominee Pierce received 511 votes, while the Whig candidate, Winfield Scott, received 1193 votes. In the election of 1856, the Know–Nothing nominee, former president Millard Fillmore, received 1313. It appears that some of the boxes in the county did not turn in any votes for Fremont, the Republican nominee.

In the election of 1860 the Democratic party split into two sections, slaveholding states versus free states. The southern or

slave states nominated John C. Breckenridge of Kentucky, and the northern or antislave section nominated Stephen A. Douglas; Abraham Lincoln was the Republican nominee. There were thousands of voters that were not satisfied with any nominee, so what was known as the Constitutional Union Party was formed. The party was so named for its position on maintaining the Union and upholding the Constitution. John Bell of Tennessee was that party's nominee.

Bell was an able man, having served as state senator, U.S. congressman, U.S. senator, and as secretary of war in the cabinet of President William Henry Harrison. Bell was a Whig who had been formerly a Jackson Democrat. He was close both personally and politically to such great men as Daniel Webster and Henry Clay. Additionally, he was a close friend of C. H. Williams whose home he visited at Lexington in April of 1847. Williams was very instrumental in Bell's election to the U.S. Senate. The county votes in that 1860 election were Bell, 1246; Breckenridge, 611; Douglas, 74; and none for Lincoln. Bell carried Tennessee, Kentucky, and Virginia with 22 electoral votes, but Lincoln was elected, even though he did not receive a majority of the popular vote.

### *Agriculture*

Local agricultural practices were upgraded by the use of better methods and equipment. This progress was due, in part, to an act passed in 1855 by the Legislature which created fairs for displaying agricultural and home products. Under this act, fair associations were established for each of the Three Grand Divisions and for each county. R. S. Bradford and William B. Hall, both considered successful local farmers, were West Tennessee Fair Association officers.

The West Tennessee Fair was first held at Jackson and has continued there to this day. It was at this fair in 1856 that two-horse and one-horse wrought iron and cast iron plows were first displayed. One of the earliest owners of such a two-horse plow was William Morgan. The first Henderson County Fair Association was organized in 1856, with John Brook as act-

ing president. Later, Obidiah Hendrix was made permanent president.

By 1858, the average price for an acre of land was \$4.60, and the average cost of a slave was \$865. In 1859, the 1658 slaves in the county were valued at \$3,823,055; property was valued at \$505,953, and gross taxable property equaled \$10,826,059.

The county's largest industry remained that of cotton gins, with gross sales of cotton from 30 gins totaling \$1,200,000 in 1856. Between 1855 and 1860, a woolen mill was established on Piney Creek near the Petty cotton gin; the mill operated until the Civil War closed it. It made the farmers' wool into thread and for one-fourth of that wool, cloth could be woven.

### *Religion*

The religious fever that swept the country during the first half of the nineteenth century appeared to have slowed before the Civil War. During this time, the following churches were active: Antioch, Barren Springs, Hurricane, Middlefork, Mifflin, and Mt. Aarat Primitive Baptist; Bible Grove, Chapel Hill, Hepzibah, Jack's Creek, Jerusalem, Judson, Lexington, Ridge Grove, Shiloh Union, and Union Hill Missionary Baptist; Cedar Grove and Little Rock (Center Hill) United Baptist; Crowell Chapel, Ebenezer, Lexington, Mt. Moriah, New Hope, Old Prospect, Olive Branch, Rock Springs, Scotts Hill, and Shady Grove Methodist; and Beech Grove, Big Springs, Palestine, Mt. Gilead, and Utah (later Luray) Cumberland Presbyterian.

The first minister of Bethel Methodist Church was the potter, Tinsley Craven. After his death in 1860, his son, Randolph, succeeded him as pastor and later became a well-known circuit rider. Other ministers active at this time included A. D. Bryant, pastor of the Lexington Methodist Congregation; John Barrett, a Cumberland Presbyterian; a Reverend Norman, a Presbyterian from Whiteville; a Reverend Crowell, Methodist; a Reverend Collins, pastor of Union Church, and a Reverend Perlsielen at Hepzibah.

### *Education*

In 1850, the state began to send money to counties for public



education, and in 1858, Henderson County received \$3188.25 to be used for its schools, at which time there were 60 county teachers whose average salary was \$20 a month. In most communities, state support covered two and one-half months of school and subscriptions supplemented terms to three months and, in some instances, five or six months.

Because of the low salary and short school term, teaching was a second occupation for most teachers. In the Federal Census of 1850, the only men who listed teaching as their profession were Richard Barnham, Robert Chumney, Francis Ray, and George Stewart. No women were listed as working in a public capacity.

The scholastic population of Henderson County, children ages six to 21, in 1859 was 4232, varying between 3200 and 4340 during 1850 and 1860. On February 8, 1850, the State Department of Education was directed to divide \$18,000 from the state treasury equally among academies regardless of county population. In 1858, the Lexington Academy received \$2685 from the state.

The female academy at Lexington continued to prosper and was still known as Miss Colburn's School despite her marriage. Howell's Female Academy also opened during the 1850s. It was operated by a Methodist minister named Cole, who had operated a similar school in Owensboro, Kentucky. Some other schools opened in the county were Antioch, Beech River, Bible Grove, Brown, Cedar Grove, Chapel Hill, Crowell, Ebenezer, Farmville, Graves Chapel, Independence, Judson, Little Rock (Center Hill), Middle Fork, Moores Hill, Mosses, Mt. Gilead, Oak Grove Crossroads, Palestine, Pinch (later Juno), Pleasant Exchange, Pleasant Hill, Priddy, Prospect (east part of county), Red Mount, Rest, Rhodes (Laster), Rock Hill (Poplar Springs), Scotts Hill, Scuffle Ridge, Sheppard, Shiloh, Union, Union Hill, and White (also Tulip).

#### *Henderson County Poor Farm*

In 1851, the Henderson County Court elected A. S. Johnson, Stephen Massengill, and J. S. Priddy commissioners to see that destitute county residents would be provided with food, clothing, and lodging. The commissioners purchased from Absalom



The superintendent's house at the Henderson County Poor Farm;  
right wing built in 1870s.

McGee 274 $\frac{3}{4}$  acres located three and one-half miles south of Lexington for the sum of \$900. This tract of land was part of an original land grant deed owned by Solomon West. Two log houses with two rooms each were constructed to provide houses for paupers.

The keeper, or steward, of the Henderson County Poor Farm was permitted free use of the land, housing and the sum of \$5 for each pauper per month for support and maintenance. People were admitted to the farm by an order signed by at least one of the commissioners. Accommodations were average, with plenty of food, clothing, and comfortable beds on which to sleep. There is no record of those who served as stewards prior to 1861; however, Thomas A. Smith reportedly received \$69.83 as his support payment as steward for the first quarter of that year. Later, the title of steward was changed to superintendent.

An insane asylum had been built near Nashville in 1849, but

this distant location was too far to benefit county residents. Consequently, the poor farm facilities as well as other selected facilities for individuals were used to accommodate those in need of care.

### Lost Tranquility: 1861–1865

Governor Isham Harris called the Legislature to session on January 7, 1861, to pass a resolution asking citizens to vote on February 9 for or against a convention to consider the secession of Tennessee from the Union. The people voted against the proposition by a majority of nearly four to one. After the Union surrender at Fort Sumpter in April of 1861, Governor Harris called for another election to be held on June 8 with the results in favor of secession.

The vote in Henderson County was 801 for secession, 1013 against secession. Charges and countercharges of election corruption were leveled. James Hanna, who lived in the south part of the county, made an affidavit stating that the votes at his home box were reversed. The vote had been 72 against and only five for secession, but when the "Harris-controlled men who had charge of the election sent in the returns, they gave 75 for secession and five against." R. H. White recalled the event as follows:

Unquestionably terrific pressure was put upon the voters, as is characteristic of most hard-fought political contests; charges and countercharges of coercion and downright fraud were launched by partisans on each side. The lopsided vote in certain counties seems to indicate that chicanery may have been present and voting. Shelby County, including Memphis, out of a total vote of more than 7000 yielded only fives votes for "no separation." Its nearby neighbor, Lauderdale, reported only seven votes for Unionism. Only five West Tennessee counties, Carroll, Decatur, Hardin, Henderson, and Weakley, returned majorities for the Union. West Tennessee was for separation by a ratio of more than four to one. Middle Tennessee was strong for "separation," the ratio being seven to one. Three counties in this

area reported not a solitary vote for Unionism, namely, Franklin, Lincoln, and Humphreys. In East Tennessee it was altogether a different story, for Unionism triumphed by a more than two-to-one ratio. Taking the state as a whole, the vote for alignment with the Southern Confederacy was impressive and decisive, the majority vote being in the neighborhood of 55,000.

Although Tennessee voted to secede and immediately join the Confederacy, it was not until July 31, 1861, that Harris officially joined the state's military forces with those of the Confederate government.

Despite secession, Henderson County Court had a proUnion majority membership. As clearly stated at the opening of the 1861 term:

Be it remembered that a county court was begun and held for said county of Henderson at the court house in the town of Lexington on the first Monday of August, it being the 5th day of said month in the year of our Lord one thousand eight hundred and sixty one, and of American Independence the 86th year.

The Legislature authorized all counties to raise, organize, and equip a provisional force. The county court complied with a motion to that effect, but no provisional company was ever raised. The following court action concerning this matter was recorded:

A motion was made and seconded to appoint a home guard of minute men for the several Districts of said County in pursuance of the 16 Section of said act and the year being taken thereon the following Justices voted for the same to wit B. J. Teague, I. L. Phillips and John H. Sherond and the following Justices voted against said motion to wit Esqrs. Henry, Kizer, D. M. McCallum, Stewart, J. P. Thomas, Brown, Fry, Masurgie, M. Thomas, Garner, McAdams, John Teague, Peeler, Pearson, Wilson, Clark, Howard, Pinkston, John R. Teague, Pennyman, Alfred McCallum, Garor, John M. Smith, E. D. Smith, Ab. McCallum, Dyer, Nelson, Moore, MacKey, Walker, Rhodes, Davis, Anderson, Fuller, and Evans.

Immediately after Tennessee seceded, Lincoln attempted to hold as many people loyal to the Union as possible. One Sunday

afternoon in September of 1861, a man named Harve Roach appeared at the home of Asa "Black Hawk" Hays, perhaps the county's most colorful war leader. At the age of 15, Hays ran away from home to join the army and to fight in the Black Hawk Indian War. While in Illinois, he met a company of soldiers commanded by a Captain Abraham Lincoln, who quickly became attached to Hays. Twenty-six years later, President Lincoln sent Roach as an emissary to seek Hays' assistance in bolstering Union support and to disrupt Confederate efforts in the county. Hays agreed to help his former commander and rode with Roach throughout most of Henderson and Decatur counties.

On one occasion Roach was captured by Confederate sympathizers who planned to take him to Columbia for court-martial as a Union spy. While riding enroute to Columbia, Roach managed to maneuver an escape that resulted in his being shot in the back. Eventually, he made his way to the home of an Austin family near Scotts Hill who were Union sympathizers, where he was nursed back to health. After almost a month, Roach traveled by night to the home of Hays who succeeded in leading Roach to the Kentucky border. Roach eventually made his way to Paducah, where he successfully crossed the Ohio River into Illinois and to safety.

Both armies campaigned to enlist men for military service. Local leaders who solicited for the Confederacy were C. H. Williams, Jr., and Jesse Taylor. Williams was a son of the former congressman and leader of the Whig party from Lexington. Taylor was a popular politician and former county court clerk. Despite the standing of these men, volunteers were slow to join. Hays and others had been more successful.

Union sympathizers were handicapped by the lack of a recruiting station; men had to leave the state, the majority of the volunteers traveling as far as Illinois to join the Union army. Hays reportedly sent at least 150 residents of Henderson and Decatur counties to fight against the rebel cause. Among these soldiers were William Essary, father of E. W. Essary; Thomas W. Goff, father of G. W. Goff; and Bill, Jesse, and Steve Goff. Thomas Goff died at Mounds, Illinois, in 1863.

One Saturday during August or early September of 1861, a speaker and a brass band appeared at Lexington to “drum up volunteers to help put down and stop the invasion of the Lincoln Black Republicans.” A Confederate flag was raised near the speaker’s stand on the southwest side of court square. The speaker, from Jackson, was introduced by young Williams. Black Hawk Hays and his “Brown Creekers”—men from the east part of the county—gathered at the square in anticipation of a ruckus. As the speaker began his condemnation of the North, Hays and his followers, including Jacob Pike of Center Point Community, the Thomas brothers from the headwaters of Piney Creek, Bill and John Stewart from Reagan, J. R. Stewart from Palestine, and others, crossed Main Street to obtain from a saloon an American flag which they proceeded to raise. This action resulted in an unabashed free-for-all. The 40 or 50 Confederate soldiers present made no attempts to prevent the fighting but did stop any shooting and knifing. The majority of the Confederate soldiers were local men who had recently volunteered and were personal friends of the Union supporters. The fighting resulted in the speaker and band’s being escorted quickly out of town.

Henderson Countians served in the Confederate Army with distinction. Although scattered among many outfits, the majority served in the 21st Tennessee Cavalry Regiment (Wilson’s) and the 16th Tennessee Cavalry Regiment; Company C under the command of Captain J. J. Rice; Company F commanded by Captain James Stinnett; the 19th Tennessee Cavalry Regiment (Biffle’s); and Company K, under General Nathan Bedford Forrest, consisting of men also from Gibson and Wayne counties.

However, it was the 27th Tennessee Regiment that saw more active service than any other Confederate outfit. Activated at Trenton in the summer of 1861, it consisted of four companies from Henderson County. C. H. “Kit” Williams was captain of the company known as “Felix Rebels.” B. H. Brown commanded a company known as “the Sharpshooters.” Richard Barham and S. A. Sayle were the commanders of the two other companies.

When the regiment was reorganized, Williams was made colonel; Brown, lieutenant colonel; Samuel Love, major; Robert Wilkerson, sergeant major; D. A. McKaney, surgeon; and J. Wingo, assistant surgeon. W. P. Timberlake was elected captain of the company formerly commanded by Williams, and John M. Taylor became captain of the company formerly commanded by Brown. These four companies contained approximately 1000 men.

This outfit fought its first battle at Belmont, then moved into Kentucky at Bowling Green, and on to Nashville. The regiment was part of the main western army of the Confederacy, and at Nashville it became a part of the army commanded by General Albert Sidney Johnson. At Murfreesboro in December of 1861, it took part in the furious charges which swept the right wing of the Federals back several miles; at Chickamauga, it fought with superb courage, forcing the enemy back at every point; at Missionary Ridge, it held ground against overwhelming numbers; and at Jonesboro and Lovejoy, it fought with courage and was a part of the doomed campaign that saw the last hope of the Confederacy in Tennessee vanish. It fought its last battle at Bentonville and surrendered in April of 1865. Less than half of the men who left the county returned.

An estimated 150 Henderson Countians served in the 52nd Tennessee Regiment, with Colonel B. J. Lea as its commanding officer. In early 1862, it was stationed to guard the Henderson railroad station, then moved to Corinth, and later took part in the Battle of Shiloh, unfavorably. The 52nd Regiment redeemed itself after many bloody battles at such places as Perryville, Murfreesboro, Chickamauga, the Georgia Campaign, the Battle of Franklin, and later at Nashville. The regiment surrendered at North Carolina in April of 1865.

The majority of Henderson Countians supporting the Union cause served in the Seventh Union Regiment of Tennessee Cavalry, U.S.A. Three full companies were raised in the county: one commanded by Major T. A. Smith, with A. T. Hart and Frank Reed as lieutenants; one raised by Captain Hays; and one commanded by J. W. Beatty, with J. J. Wallace and a man

named Helme as lieutenants. Captain Derryberry raised a part of a company consisting of 29 men, with Isaac N. Hawkins of Huntingdon as lieutenant colonel commanding. The entire regiment consisted of 650 men, about one-half of whom were from the county.

The Battle of Lexington and the Battle of Parker's Crossroads were the two battles that took place in the county. On October 11, 1862, Confederate cavalry leader General Forrest crossed the Tennessee River at Clifton, and six days later attacked Colonel Robert Ingersol's Union brigade at Lexington. Ingersol, defeated, surrendered his entire army. Some county members of the brigade who knew the terrain escaped. Forrest captured two Rodman steel cannons in addition to other supplies and 150 men.

Following the Lexington engagement, Forrest moved on to Trenton, Union City, and Kentucky destroying railroads vital to the support of General Grant in Mississippi. On his way back to the river crossing at Clifton, he was attacked on December 31, 1862, at Parker's Crossroads by Union forces under Colonels Dunham and Fuller and General Sullivan. At first it appeared another victory for Forrest in the defeat of Dunham's forces, until Fuller and Sullivan brought their armies into the fight. The unequal number of men resulted in a Union victory, but Forrest and most of his men who had horses escaped.

The government of the county remained intact during this period since all county officials continued to serve in their respective positions, and the county post offices never were taken over officially by the Confederate government. John Samuel Fielder, who had been appointed postmaster at Lexington under the administration of President James Buchanan, continued his service through the Civil War. A. H. Rhodes was county court clerk and continued to serve until 1876; W. H. Shelby was sheriff; J. A. Henry was register; J. W. G. Jones was clerk and master of chancery court; and E. J. Timberlake was circuit court clerk during the war. Circuit Court Judge John Reed resigned in 1861, and court was held by special judges during the war.





Major Milton Hardy, Union Army, 26 years old; commissioned by the colonel of his regiment to abduct Governor Isham Harris in Paris, Tennessee, in 1862; Hardy was killed during his unsuccessful mission.

The county court at its October of 1861 meeting levied a tax of ten cents on each \$100 worth of merchandise offered for sale, ten cents on each \$100 of spiritan union or fermented liquors, and \$5 on any kind of show. These taxes were for the support of the families of Confederate volunteers. There was much opposition to the taxes and many refused to pay them, especially Union sympathizers. No record was found to indicate if the taxes were collected.

The Legislature did not meet during the war due to Union occupation. Emerson Etheridge of Dresden was the county's representative in the U.S. House of Representatives when the war began, and he continued to represent the district under the Confederacy. Andrew Johnson continued as a U.S. senator until President Lincoln appointed him as the state's military governor in 1863. Johnson had tried to restore civil government throughout the state by ordering an election of new county officials under the jurisdiction of the Federal Army, but the scheme failed because citizens, including those in Henderson County, refused to participate.

In a gesture of peace to the South, Lincoln chose Johnson to run as his vice-president. In September of 1864, a Union convention met in Nashville to select Lincoln and Johnson electors. The Lincoln ticket received all votes cast in the November election. In Henderson County, only five boxes, all of which gave a majority vote to Lincoln and Johnson, were used. Since so few people voted and due to confusion concerning the votes, the county's participation in the election was never reported.

In May of 1863 the county courthouse burned. According to the *Goodspeed* history, the fire had been accidentally started by members of the Third Michigan Cavalry who were quartered there. The fire upset many local people, including Union sympathizers, who thought the destruction of the building had been deliberate since the conduct of the Michigan soldiers had not been always exemplary. Only a few records were saved, including the one-volume minutes of the county court for years 1860-1863 and the volume from the register's office that contained deeds and slave transactions. After the fire, the county court met

upstairs at William Brooks' storehouse located on the southwest corner of the public square in Lexington. Later, the court met in the law office of T. C. Muse and in the Masonic Lodge. No effort was made to replace the courthouse until after the war.

The county court met on Monday, January 7, 1864, to authorize Ambroso Hart, superintendent of the county poor farm, to be paid \$28.70 for services occurring in part of the preceding quarter and to elect John G. Carsus, Thomas N. Hart, and Samuel Howard as commissioners of the farm for the next 12 months. Another action shown in the minutes of that meeting was cited as follows:

This day the court proceeded to open and hold an election for a commissioner to examine all applicants to teach free schools in Henderson County for the ensuing twelve months and upon counting out the votes it appeared to the court that Dr. T. J. Kalpatrick was duly elected commissioner for the purpose aforesaid.

Kalpatrick began medical practice at Mifflin in 1858. A well-educated man, he also taught school in connection with his practice.

At the state constitutional convention held in Nashville, one of the several adopted amendments abolished slavery. All amendments were submitted to a vote in the special election held on February 22, 1865. By an overwhelming majority, voters ratified all amendments. Tennessee, therefore, actually freed slaves ten months before the 13th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, adopted on December 18, 1865. Under the provisions of the amended state constitution, William Gannaway Brownlow of Knoxville was elected governor with near-dictatorial powers. An ordained Methodist minister, Brownlow was uncompromising in his loyalty to the Union.

### Road to Recovery: 1866–1890

The years that immediately followed the Civil War were those of hardship, strife, and gloom. Both sides in the county

were defiant and felt mistreated. Two battles in Henderson County, grain and hay wasted, robbing of stores and residences, destruction of farming tools, and other deprivations of war left the people with little money, food, or clothing. The road to recovery for business, industry, and agriculture in the county was rough and rugged.

Both armies had confiscated virtually all good horses and mules in the county; consequently, it took nearly five years to replace stock to enable agriculture to begin again. Good breeding animals frequently were imported from the North to aid this effort: A. B. Cunningham purchased a first-class work stallion; Clark Diffie and Columbus Davis owned expensive mules; Davis' jack was imported from Spain; James Dodd, Euphrates Flake, and many other farmers purchased good breeding stock.

As work stock became plentiful, more ground was cleared for cultivation. Within a few years, many former slaves settled into a sharecropping pattern of living. Many even continued to live in the same houses in which they had lived before the war. Domestic services also were continued for landlords. This arrangement enabled many former slaves to accumulate enough money to purchase their own farms. These industrious sharecroppers are the ancestors of many fine families who still live in Henderson County.

By 1870 most cotton gins had reopened, and the market for cotton was good with seed cotton usually selling for about seven to ten cents per pound. Henderson County farmers were once again able to produce enough corn and wheat for consumption.

The first hay mowing machine was brought into the county by Ashley Cunningham in 1886. Auburn Powers described an incident of interest involving this machine and its owner:

Mr. Cunningham mowed a field of red top for W. M. Friendship, and it is reported that people came from far and near to see the machine work. The blade clicking a rapid rhythm, and a wide strip of red top being cut as fast as the horses could draw the machine were manifestations of a great step forward in the production of hay, for heretofore all hay had

been cut by hand with a scythe or "cradle." And it was rare to find a man who could wield a cradle skillfully.

During the immediate postwar period numerous businesses were established in Lexington; among them were Boswell, Fielder and Company, W. F. Brooks, Dennison and Muse, T. Edwards, W. R. Elkins, G. W. Florence, J. H. Lofton, F. W. McHaney, John McHaney and Company, and Scott and Stanford. Two hotels, Scott House, near where the Lexington post office now stands, and the Kizer House, near the railway depot, were opened. Felix R. Bray established a successful general store at Lone Elm in 1876. In 1875 M. L. Galloway became a partner in the Galloway and Elkins Livery and Feed Stable. J. N. Hall of Lexington was a leading druggist in the town. F. Lafayette and W. C. McHaney were successful businessmen at Mifflin and Crucifer.

Each county community had blacksmith shops, but among the best known owners were J. A. Eller and H. E. Riley and Sons at Lexington; R. W. Phillips and George H. Richardson at Luray; J. F. Austin, A. Fanning, and W. A. White at Scotts Hill; and J. C. Austin, J. F. Edwards, J. H. Mayo, and Stanfill and Hanna at Sardis. A machine shop at Lexington operated by inventor Eli Jones also did good business.

The first telephone system in Henderson County was established during the summer of 1884, with the early lines running from Jackson to Lexington. The first telephone was installed in what is now known as the Timberlake and Buckley building. Although at first a novelty, telephones opened a new era in communication. The city of Jackson had benefited from the telegraph 30 years earlier, and the city was in direct connection with the rest of the county with the addition of the telephone. Lexington, however, had telephone service before it had telegraph service, since the telegraph came to the county with the construction of the railroads. The operator of the Lexington-to-Jackson line was Jennine Edwards, who received \$10 per month for her services. The first person to speak on the line is

unknown, but it is believed that some of the first people to use that line were G. W. McCall and his brother.

### *Religion*

During the difficult postwar period, the following Missionary Baptist churches were organized: Mazies Chapel in 1866 with 63 members, Mt. Ararat in 1867 with 88 members, New Fellowship in 1868 with 42 members, Piney Creek in 1872 with 48 members, and Mt. Gilead with 96 members and Rock Hill with 68 members, both in 1884. A Cumberland Presbyterian church was formed at Luray in 1890 with 37 members, and a Methodist church at Oak Grove in 1888 with 40 members. There was also a Methodist Church active at Sardis before 1890.

### *Politics and Government*

In July of 1866 the Henderson County Court appointed H. G. Treadgill as chairman, and A. H. Rhodes, J. P. Fuller, J. R. Teague, and Samuel Howard as the committee responsible for the contracting and construction of a new courthouse. The building contract was let to Robert Dyer for \$7450. Completed on schedule on October 1, 1867, the county court held session in the new building on the first Monday of October. The county offices were located on the ground floor with the large courtroom upstairs. The courtroom served as the location for political conventions and other programs in addition to serving the needs of the various courts—county, circuit, chancery, and magistrate. This building burned in 1895.

On February 25, 1869, Governor Brownlow resigned to assume duties as a U.S. senator, an office he had been elected to by his own legislature. In 1869, Republicans in the state were divided into Conservatives and Radicals. The Conservatives favored restoration of voting rights which the Radicals opposed, even though President Johnson had pardoned all former Confederate soldiers and sympathizers at the 1869 Republican convention. The Conservatives nominated Dewitt Clinton Senter, and the Radicals nominated W. B. Stokes. The enfranchised Democrats, voting for the first time in ten years, sup-



Henderson County Courthouse that burned in 1895

ported Senter, thus classifying him as a Democrat. The vote in Henderson County was 1151 votes for Senter and 724 votes for Stokes. The majority of the Republicans in the county aligned with the Conservative faction of the party and has remained so.

Although the majority of the Whigs supported the Republican Party after the Civil War, the Republican margin over that of the Democrats was not as large as the Whig majority had been. The following returns recorded for the presidential elections from 1868 through 1880 indicate the Republican strength in the county, since only the elections of 1872 and 1876 were carried by the Democratic candidates: (1886) Seymore—105, Grant (R)—644; (1872) Greeley—849, Grant (R)—768; (1876) Tilden—1357, Hayes (R)—999; (1880) Hancock—1274, Garfield (R)—1355; (1884) Cleveland—1478, Blaine (R)—1629; (1888) Cleveland—1123, Harrison (R)—1642. Horace Greeley had been a strong Union supporter, and many Republicans voted with the newly enfranchised Democrats.

A constitutional convention convened at Nashville in 1870 to rewrite the state constitution. The one drawn by that convention was adopted and is the current constitution, with the exception of a few amendments. The Honorable John M. Taylor repre-

sented the county at that convention and participated in drafting the actual constitution.

In 1882, nearly 100 square miles were taken from the southwest portion of the county to create Chester County. The remainder of that county came from Madison and McNairy counties. An unsuccessful lawsuit attempted to prevent the partition, since many Henderson Countians considered that portion of the county to contain some of its best land. The thriving small towns of Jack's Creek and Mifflin were placed in the new county. From a political standpoint, the Republican Party in Henderson County benefited from the loss of the large numbers of Democrats transferred to Chester County. Two years later another effort was made to apportion another section of Henderson County into Chester County; however, a successful lawsuit prevented this action. The state constitution did not permit the creation of a county from the land of another county when the county line to be created was closer than 11 miles to the county seat of the county being partitioned. The Chester County line is actually 11 miles from Lexington.

The brick jail located on Purdy Street, now Monroe, was sold in 1887 to E. Flake for \$480. It was later sold to the prominent Elkins family and then passed on to Mrs. Walter Sweatt. The building again changed hands and became the property of John Sullivan, a popular political and civic leader. This two-story building was razed in 1972.

### *Education*

All educational activities came almost to a standstill during the war years, and public schools were virtually nonexistent. Local taxes collected for schools were small, and no records indicate that any tax money was spent for education during the war. The once prosperous Lexington Female Academy was closed, and, for a time, the building was occupied by Federal troops. Like the courthouse, it also burned in 1863, with Federal troops again accused in the incident. Only a few subscription schools remained open when teachers were available.



The immediate rebirth of education after the Civil War spurred the re-establishment of subscription and state-supported schools. Governor Brownlow supported public education and, in 1867, the Brownlow legislature passed a progressive education law that reinstated the office of state superintendent of schools that had been abolished in 1844, created the office of county superintendent of schools, provided for the examination of teachers, and created schools for black children. Money to help operate these schools was raised by a tax of two mills on each dollar of taxable property and a poll tax of 25 cents on each male citizen over the age of 21 and under the age of 50.

The Federal Census of 1870 showed that illiteracy had increased to 50 percent within the state, since it was the first time all blacks had been included in the count. Heretofore, only three out of every five slaves had been counted. During this same time, the white population had increased by only 13 percent. The illiteracy in Henderson County had increased only 30 percent.

The Parent Act or Law of 1873 provided that all schools should be free to all persons between the ages of six and 18, for a permanent school fund of \$2,512,500 on which yearly interest was to be paid by the state for school support, and for a poll tax of \$1 to be levied for school revenue on each male voter under 50 years of age. From this poll tax Henderson County received approximately \$11,000 per year for 20 years. This amounted to \$110 for 107 teachers in the county, or an average salary of \$34.33 per month for three months, marking a considerable improvement on previous conditions.

A county school report in 1885 showed a scholastic population of 5152, 4514 whites and 638 blacks. By the end of that year, there were 87 white and ten black teachers. Under the 1873 act, Levi Woods became the first county superintendent of schools.

The Lexington Academy reopened between 1869 and 1870 as a public school. In 1885, the building was sold to the trustees of the Cumberland Presbyterian Church. Academy trustees realized \$250 from the sale, which when added to almost \$300 on hand and to additional subscriptions raised a total of \$1500.

With this money a site was purchased and a new building was completed in 1886. The new location was in south Lexington near the former location of the NC&StL depot.

The academy trustees were reorganized with C. A. Scott as president, P. J. Dennison as treasurer, and W. F. Brocks, J. N. Hall, and L. A. Stanford as members. Seymour A. Mynders was the academy's first principal, who became a state superintendent of instruction. The academy later was known as the Methodist Academy since it received some financial support from the Methodists, and still later it was recognized as the county high school. The *Goodspeed* history described the academy as follows:

The course of study embraces English language and its literature, pure and applied mathematics, natural sciences, ancient and modern languages, and bookkeeping, with a special course for teachers. About forty public school teachers have been in attendance the present year, and the whole number enrolled is about ninety-five. Diplomas were awarded those who completed the course.

Basic civil engineering was taught as part of the math course, and land surveying also was taught. The late J. W. Ballard and E. L. "Uncle Fayette" Fesmire both were trained at this school and later became county surveyors.

### *Sardis*

James Hanna settled on his land grant about 1825 in the area that became Sardis. Daniel, Elijah, James, and Malinda Story also settled on land grants there sometime prior to 1830. What is now known as the John Story farm is one of the few farms in the county to have remained in the possession of descendants of the original owners.

Thirty years prior to the Civil War a popular campground was located south of the present Sardis business district, where the cemetery is now located. Isaac W. Hassell, who is generally considered to be the actual founder of Sardis, built a store and also became the first postmaster. Some early settlers in the area included the Blantons, Crabbs, Craigs, Dyers, Englands, Faggs,

Hannas, Hamms, Johnsons, Littles, McNatts, Medlins, Phillips, Presleys, Smiths, Stanfills, Wilburns, Wilhites, and Williams.

Of the early Sardis residents, William Dyer later became circuit court clerk; William McBride became sheriff, and R. A. Lewis was a circuit court clerk and later became an official of the Central State Bank at Lexington.

### *Local Legends*

According to the *Guinness Book of World Records*, the world's largest man lived, died, and was buried in Henderson County. This man was Mills Darden, frequently called "Miles." Born in 1798, Darden left his native North Carolina in 1821 and settled near the village of Mifflin. There he cleared the land, built a house, married, and raised five children. It was said that Darden's coat could be buttoned around three normal men, that his hat was as large as a beehive, and that his trousers, if the cuffs were tied together, could hold ten bushels of corn.

Darden's continually increasing size prevented his doing the manual labor required by his farm, so he moved to Lexington and opened a tavern and inn on the present site of Stewart's Drug Store. Darden's business prospered since he was an intelligent man with good business sense, who not only provided excellent food but good service too. His size also attracted people who came hundreds of miles to see him and to visit the tavern and inn. Again, his continued growth made it difficult for him to carry on his business, so he sold it and moved to what is now known as the Dunnivant farm, eight miles southwest of Lexington.

At the time of his death on January 23, 1857, Darden's weight was estimated between 1020-1080 pounds, and his height was seven feet, ten inches. The coffin constructed for his body used 520 feet of lumber and measured eight feet, four inches long and 40 inches wide at the shoulder. He was buried near his farm in Chapel Hill Community. Darden's 90-pound wife died shortly after his death and was buried next to him. Due to the interest of W. L. Barry and the Tennessee Historical Society, markers have been placed on their graves and a historical

marker has been placed on the Life and Garnertown Road where the intersection leads to the grave sites.

On the last Sunday in April of 1886 a strange man appeared in what was then known as Warrens Bluff Community. The man claimed to be a minister ordained by Jesus Christ. At this appearance he stated that he would again appear at Lexington on a particular Saturday, and on that day he predicted that a roar of thunder would fill the air even though the sky would be clear of clouds. As predicted, a roaring noise like thunder was heard for several miles when he made his appearance at Lexington.

A serialized article, "Mysterious Preacher" written by Hyrum Belnap, was published in the Mormon publication *Juvenile Instructor* at Salt Lake City in 1886 and dealt with this appearance of the strange preacher. It summarized the event as follows:

On the afternoon of the same day there appeared near Lexington the county seat, a strange man, of spare build, medium height, fair skin, dark brown curly hair, and a light beard of reddish cast. He was poorly clad. His appearance indicated that he was about thirty years of age. He announced a religious meeting to be held in the neighborhood that evening. Because of the unusual nature of his arrival, his apparent knowledge of the roads and even paths in the fields, the meeting was well attended. He conducted the meeting alone, sang and preached in manner unlike that of evangelistic preaching current at the time. At the conclusion of the meeting, when plied with questions, he said that his name was Robert Edge, and that he belonged to the Church of God. He refused to reveal whence he had come. At the solicitation of the congregation he appointed other meetings to be held in the vicinity, and soon his fame as a preacher had spread far and near. In due time, by an exchange of notes and gossip, it was discovered that no one had ever seen him any distance from a place of worship, and that he was never seen until he arrived in the crowd or had assumed his place in the pulpit. Persons appointed to watch him lost track of him before he had proceeded far. He never inquired directions from one place to another, and yet always arrived according to appointment.

The preacher disappeared as suddenly as he had appeared, leaving behind numerous rumors and speculations. Many residents believed the man to be the mythical “Wandering Jew,” often chronicled in the lore of European Middle Ages.

### *Transportation*

The Tennessee River continued to be the most frequent carrier of freight for Henderson County with Saltillo and Perryville as ports serving the county. Stagecoaches offered the only public means of transportation until the late 1880s, carrying both mail and passengers. Merchants with business in the western and northern parts of the county went to Jackson for their merchandise since that city had a rail service. The most popular stagecoach route was that from Jackson to Clifton, by way of Mifflin, Lexington, and Scotts Hill. At Clifton it made connections with steamboats that carried passengers as well as freight and continued enroute to such cities as Nashville, Paducah, and Memphis.

On Tuesday, August 14, 1888, a grading and construction contractor, named Maddox, lifted the first shovel of dirt to begin building the railroad that would revolutionize the economy of Henderson County. The county court pledged the sum of \$75,000 to the Tennessee Middlin Company for the construction of the railroad through the county to the Decatur County line; there other arrangements were made to continue the railroad to Perryville. The company intended to build a bridge at Perryville and continue the railroad to Nashville.

The grading and construction of the railroad furnished employment for over 100 residents. A farmer with a good team of mules could make as much as \$3.50 per day working on railroad construction. The railroad reached completion within six months, and the first run from Perryville to Memphis and back occurred on February 4, 1889; that date was the first Monday in the month—mule and horse trading day. A large crowd gathered to see the train and mingled with passengers who made the trip to Memphis out of curiosity. Initially, there was only one

passenger train each day. In Henderson County the railroad company located stations or depots at Chesterfield, Darden, Huron, Lexington, Life, Luray, Warrens Bluff, and in Decatur County at Beacon, Parsons, and Perryville. A table was constructed at Perryville to turn the locomotive around.

The first engine used was a small two-wheeler weighing approximately 50 tons that could haul approximately 200 tons. Although the Westinghouse airbrake had been invented in 1869, it was not in full use on all trains. This brake enabled the engineer to apply the brakes on all passenger or freight cars at the same time. Without the air brakes each car had to be individually braked by brakemen who would turn the breaking wheels at the end of the cars.

For 30 years the railroad was the only utility of any consequence in the county and was by far its biggest taxpayer. About 1891, the railroad line was completed to the Carroll County line and then on to Hollow Rock Junction where connections could be made to such cities as Nashville, and Paducah and Hickman, Kentucky. Henderson County was then connected with outside communities. Extension to Hollow Rock Junction was by the Paducah, Tennessee, and Alabama Railroad Company. Later the entire system became known as the Nashville, Chattanooga and St. Louis Railway. The stations located between Lexington and Hollow Rock Junction were Timberlake and Wildersville in Henderson County and Buna, Westport, Yuma, and Vista in Carroll County.

Cotton and other farm products soon began to be transported by rail. Lexington became the center of the Memphis and Paducah division, and over one-half of the employees, approximately 500 in number, lived in the city. Terminals were later located there, and until they were moved in 1922, as many as 15 locomotives could be repaired and maintained on the Lexington yard. The payroll of the railroad boosted the economy of the county. Railroad employees and their families provided a constant market where local farmers could peddle their products. Railroad salaries were considered "big money" with engineers receiving \$5 a day, and section hands earning as much as \$1.10 a day.

Railroads also brought the cross tie industry to the county. After local farmers harvested their crops, they made cross ties and hauled them by wagon to the nearest depot, where there was always a ready market to supplement their income. Martin Youngerman of Shady Hill managed a team of mules and made and hauled cross ties for the railroad. By hard work and frugality, he prospered and became a successful man.

Stave mills and lumber mills also appeared in the area and furnished jobs for many men. Saw mills were operated at Pipkin (Cedar Grove) between Sardis and Scotts Hill. The largest lumber operation was the Edwards, Oakley, and Utley Planing Mill located at Wildersville, which included a saw mill. Sometimes as many as 15 men worked at this mill. After the lumber was made at the saw mill, it was planed and shipped by carload.

### Period of Enthusiasm: 1890–1920

From the close of the Civil War until 1890, the work of Reconstruction was carried on by the people who were young adults as the war started. That generation had done a commendable job in returning Henderson County to an orderly society and to stability. Reared with sacrifices and hard work, these people determined to build upon this foundation.

#### *Agriculture*

Agriculture progressed substantially during these years, primarily due to the rapid improvement in farm equipment. Most farm equipment was drawn by either horse or mule, since it was not until 1918 that the first tractor was used in the county. Jake Benson of Reagan purchased a Moline tractor in that year, and later became the agent for that brand of tractor. The Moline tractor was different from most on the market at that time because the breaking cultivating plows were positioned in front of the driver. R. L. Diffe also purchased one of the county's first tractors, a McCormick Dearing, forerunner of the International Harvester.

Until after the Civil War cotton seed was planted by hand. A common practice was to wet the seed in water and ashes, then to

roll the seed until it separated in the hands. The seed was dropped by hand into a furrow made by a shovel plow and then covered. Sometimes the seed was dropped into holes made by a hoe before being covered. Both methods were slow, but large farms and plantations usually had slaves do the work. Near the end of the war homemade drum planters commonly were utilized. These planters usually were constructed of wood in the shape of a drum with an axel run lengthwise through the center. Each end of the axel was attached to a wooden frame pulled by a horse or mule. Holes large enough for a seed to pass through were cut in the center of the drum about six inches apart. As the drum rolled over the ground, seed would drop out of the holes into the small furrow made by the plow attached to the frame in front of the drum. Small boards attached to the frame behind the drum would cover the seed with soil. The drum planter was a cumbersome and heavy machine, but it represented an important improvement. By 1900, the homemade drum planter was supplanted by factory-made planters that were much lighter and more efficient.

Corn planters also came into use at this time as did steam wheat thrashers. Alfred Parker of Sardis was one of the first to own one of these. He frequently took it chugging into communities and set up for farmers to bring their wheat to be ground into flour.

W. R. Wilson has been given credit for using the first commercial fertilizer in the county. It consisted of plain 16 percent phosphate, with no potash or nitrogen. Later an 8-2-2 fertilizer—eight percent phosphate, two percent nitrogen, and two percent potash—was used. Two hundred pounds of this fertilizer produced one-half bale of cotton per acre of good land.

The ginning of cotton was perhaps the biggest industry in the county early in the century, with gins located at Bargerton, Cedar Grove, Darden, Huron, Laster, Lexington, Life, Luray, Middlefork, Reagan, Sardis, Scotts Hill, Stegall, Timberlake, Warrens Bluff, and Wildersville. By 1900, all gins had changed from horse to steam power. Cotton was usually hauled to the gin in a wagon drawn by two mules, then carried in baskets from the



wagon to gin stands to be picked clean. By 1920, all gins had suction to take the cotton from the wagon to the gin floor where it was again sucked into gin stands. To handle the cotton before and after it was ginned, it frequently took a fireman, a ginner, two bale packers, two tiers, and a manager, who usually served as the cotton buyer also.

The Legislature passed an act in 1911 that required all cattle to be dipped in a prepared solution to kill cattle ticks. Dipping vats were located in every community so that no farmer would have to drive his cattle more than two miles to have them dipped. A dipping vat was usually constructed from a trench about 30 inches wide, 20 feet long, and six feet deep, lined with concrete and filled with water and the solution to kill ticks. Cattle were dipped at two-month intervals, by being pushed into the vat until they were completely submerged in water and then forced to swim to the other end of the vat.

Many farmers bitterly opposed cattle dipping and could not understand how it could work. Officials, known as "tick inspectors," who were sometimes armed for their own protection, were appointed to enforce the law. On "dip days" farmers would bring their cattle to a vat; each vat sometimes served as many as 100 cattle. Failure to comply with this law resulted in a fine, jail sentence, or both. After several years the cattle tick was eradicated.

Jersey cattle were introduced into the county around 1906. Will Lawler purchased the first registered Jersey bull, which represented a real beginning for improved dairy farming in the county. High-grade and registered beef cattle did not appear in the county until after World War I. Wash Parks of Darden produced the first purebred Poland China hogs. This breed and others were an improvement over the long-nose "ridge rooter" raised previously. In 1917, the Legislature passed a private act for Henderson County known as the "No Fence Law" which required all livestock to be fenced. Before that, farmers had fenced their crops and permitted livestock to roam.

Beech River, the largest stream of water in the county, was crooked and fed numerous swamps, sloughs, and backwaters,

making it impossible to utilize fully the rich bottomland; so, in 1916, bonds were issued and money was raised to drain this land. A steam dredge boat was placed in Beech River four miles from its head, and a large and straight channel was cut to the Decatur County line, opening hundreds of acres for cultivation. In the same year, Cane Creek was also straightened by a canal, and later other streams were drained.

### *Transportation*

Dr. W. F. Huntsman brought the first automobile, a Maxwell without a top, into Henderson County in 1909. The automobile was powered by a two-cylinder motor. The second vehicle in the county was purchased by Lexington Mayor C. G. Gathings, who was also a railroad agent. As usual, the horseless carriage created quite a disturbance in the county. Residents were slow to buy "horseless buggies," especially since all county roads consisted of dirt worked by plows, scoops, and shovels.

Railroads were still the main means of traveling any distance since there were four trains a day to Memphis and Nashville and to Paducah and Hickman, Kentucky. The first train from Memphis arrived in Lexington at 9:00 A.M. and continued to Nashville. It was followed by another at 4:00 P.M. Passengers going to Paducah, Paris, or other places between Paducah and Hickman, had to change trains at Hollow Rock Junction, later to become Bruceton. The first train from Nashville to Memphis arrived at Lexington at 11:40 A.M., and the next came at 6:40 P.M. The Perryville Branch train and crew spent the night at Perryville, which was the end of the run, and returned to Lexington at 8:00 A.M. The locomotive would switch on the yard until the first Nashville train arrived. Passengers going to Perryville and in between would board the Perryville Branch, which returned to Lexington by 3:00 P.M. It would then wait for the second Nashville train before returning to Perryville.

Rural free delivery mail carried on horseback or by horse and buggy came to the county at the turn of the century. Livery stables were abundant at Lexington, and in time also at Reagan, Sardis, and Scotts Hill. These stables provided horses and bug-

gies or team of horses on a rental basis. This method of transportation was used most frequently by salesmen, frequently called drummers, who would ride the train to Lexington and work the merchants in and around the Lexington area.

### *Education*

Educational activity began to flourish at Scotts Hill before the 1890s. Gordon Turner, a nationally known orator, educator, and religious leader, is now retired and living at his native home at Scotts Hill. In his excellent history of that community, he described its early schools as follows:

A frame building was erected in 1880 that contained two large classrooms that were also used as an auditorium. The first teacher at this school was Henri Heuterburg. He was followed by Ben Davis, W. Ben and John H. Duck, Frank and Alfred



Sardis Normal College, 1904

Austin, John H. and Jim C. Duck, Ben A. Tucker and Myra Turner.

By 1895, public interest forced the construction of a larger two-story frame building, frequently referred to as the "college." Early teachers there were Jim Duck, C. Perry Patterson, Mintie and Myra Turner, and Minnie Woodward. B. A. Tucker headed the college until his death on March 10, 1903. The faculty attempted to continue classes under the leadership of Tucker's brother, Festus, but interest waned. Some teachers who taught after Tucker's death were Herbert Bagley, Granville and Alfred Bartholomew, G. G. Butler, J. A. Bobbitt, John Duck, Perry Murphy, Mable Terry, and George L. Wortham and wife. By 1915, the old building had fallen into disrepair, and by 1917 a new brick building, containing three classrooms with movable partitions to accommodate an auditorium, was completed on the old campus. Among those who taught in this building were James M. Austin, A. C. Tarlton, Jim Duck, Maida Austin, Walt White, Ruby and Gertrude Roberts, Myrtle Johnson, Jimmy Rains, and Roxie Kelly.

One outstanding teacher at the Scotts Hill College was C. Perry Patterson, who was born in a log cabin two miles northwest of Saltillo on January 23, 1880. Patterson taught at various schools, including Cedar Grove, for which he was paid a wage of \$22.40 per month. After Tucker's death, Patterson assumed the presidency of Sardis Normal College, where he served for six years. Patterson married Tommie Cochran in 1907, a Sardis native, considered a woman of culture and education.

Patterson later left Sardis to become superintendent of county schools for one term. After he attended the University of Tennessee, Peabody College, and Vanderbilt, he headed the history department of West Tennessee Normal, where he remained for three years. This was followed by a teaching fellowship at Harvard University, later by a teaching position at Columbia, where he earned a doctorate degree, and still later by a position at the University of Texas. Patterson authored numerous books and became nationally known as an authority on constitutional law. He received many honors, including the presentation of a paper on judicial review before the judicial



Baptist College at Lexington about 1900-1902

committee of the U.S. Senate in 1937. This paper was believed to have been influential in the defeat of Roosevelt's effort to pack the Supreme Court.

Juno established an advanced school in 1898. The school was organized by professors Prince and Pearson in an old building behind the Christian Church. Curtains were used to divide the house into rooms.

About 1896 a Baptist school was opened in Lexington near where the Walker Bakery is now located on Highway 20. A. J. Barton was headmaster, and early faculty included Mae Fielder, Kate McDormon, and Bell Westbrook. According to J. A. Deere, in his history of Baptist College, mathematics, English, Latin, writing, spelling, rhetoric, and history were stressed to more

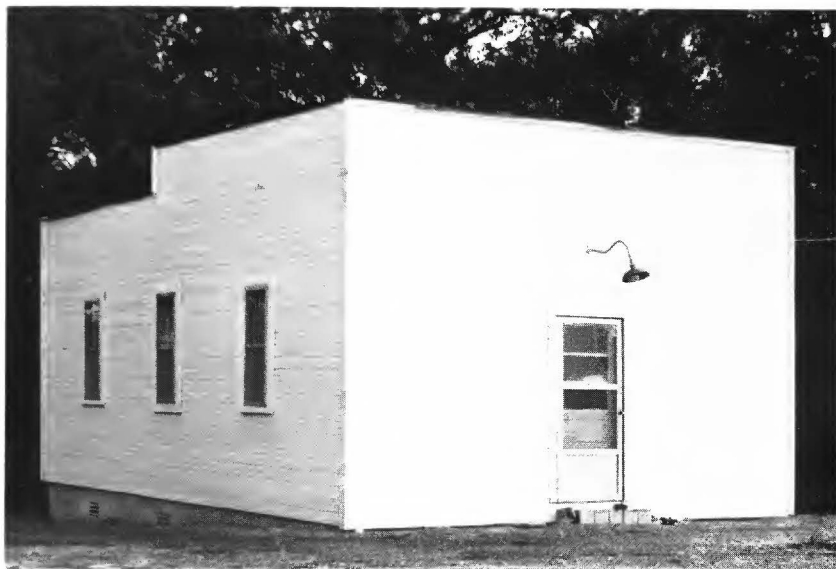


than 200 students, about half of whom boarded at the school, having come from other counties and a few from other states. In the early years the school was very competitive with Lexington Academy, but around the turn of the century the two schools shared the same building, finally merging as the Baptist College. By 1905, it occupied a new two-story brick building with a squared tower on each side, which W. H. Dennison described as "roomy, convenient, and comfortable, and in the point of architectural ugliness takes the premium."

Although private schools were active in many county communities, the public school system of Henderson County was extremely weak. Opposition still existed to the taxes for public education. As tuition schools faded, the county school system was confined to a three-month term and, in some instances, to a divided year.

Fortunately two outstanding leaders came forth to remedy these problems, Judge W. H. Dennison and J. O. Brown. Dennison was a county native and had taught school several years in both Henderson and Decatur counties. He was graduated from Southern Normal University at Huntingdon, Tennessee, in 1901. He studied law and was admitted to the bar in the summer of 1903, beginning practice at Lexington in January of 1907. Later, he was elected county superintendent

Students of Baptist College, 1902. *Left to right: front row*, Ernest Montgomery, Richard Edwards, John E. McCall, Will Jones, Valentine Barry, Bob Joyner, Van Watson, Murray Arnold; *second row*, Newbill Harvey, Geraldine Scott, Martha McCall, Lillian Moss, Eunice Melton, Cleve Hearn, Jennie Lindenfield, Eula Moffitt, Eula Franklin, Eva Bird, Lula Mae Wilkerson, Gussie McCall; *third row*, Chester Davidson, Clara Phelps, Zula Pickens, Annie Mae Gathings, Eva Edwards, Flossie Melton, Rauline Yates, Nan Haskins, Hester Enochs, Rosa Dicus; *fourth row*, Hubert Boren, Milton Edwards, Kenney Neeley, Clint McAdams, Esco Derryberry, Erle Pafford, George McCall, Royal Pafford, Ed Thomas, Ollie Tate, Prof. Hubbs; *fifth row*, Mel Scott, Louise Lawler, Dixie Winslow, Myrtle Milton, Will Henry Murray, Allie Mae McCall, Annie McCall, Iley Williams, Herbert Scott; *back row*, John Wadley, Usher Hearn, Eff McCall, Barry Jones.



Maple Grove Schoolhouse; one-teacher school, 1917.  
Now used by Maple Grove Baptist Church.

of schools which, at that time, was not a full-time job. During Dennison's years as superintendent, he led such reforms in the county educational system as insisting that all classrooms be adequately equipped with maps, globes, seats, and other equipment and materials necessary for proper instruction. He also advocated taxation for education, believing that education was a state duty more than a county duty. After ten years as superintendent, he returned to full-time law practice. Later, he was to serve on the court of appeals as chancellor and as circuit and general sessions judge.

At the time J. O. Brown advocated increased interest by the public in education, school was in session only two to three months each year. The citizens of Lexington persuaded Brown to take charge of the school, and he agreed to provide three months of public school for the amount of taxes to be collected each year and to find suitable use of the building for the remain-

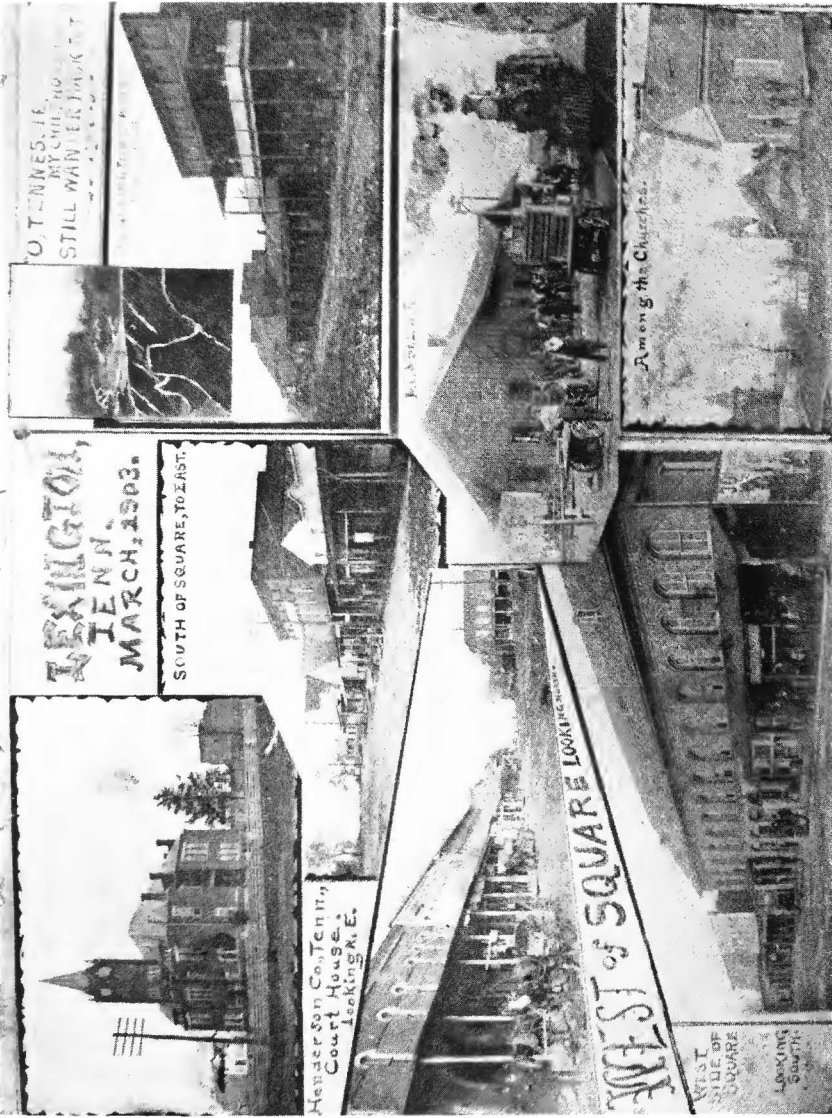


der of the year. Brown employed a faculty of five teachers and became personally responsible for their salaries. This first faculty consisted of Brown, Dell Bright, Nannie Jett, J. L. Rush, Martha Smith, and M. L. Stanfil.

Brown persuaded State Superintendent of Schools R. L. Jones to locate the West Tennessee Institute, in 1907–1908, at Lexington. About 350 teachers from West Tennessee attended this four-week institute. Brown also served as one of its instructors. The Legislature enacted a law in February of 1909 which authorized each county to levy tax and to establish a high school. The first Monday in July of 1909, Superintendent Dennison and Brown appeared before the Henderson County Court and requested that the court vote a tax sufficient to establish a high school and to comply with the state laws of public education. The court complied with the request; however, there was strong opposition to both the tax and the school.

A high school board was elected by the court and given authority to locate the school and to employ teachers. Since taxes had not been collected, there was no money. The board consulted Brown who agreed to furnish teachers, care for the school, and advance money for current expenses until the board could collect taxes to repay him. Because of Brown's dedication to public education, Lexington High School was begun. Since opposition to the high school continued, Brown and Dennison worked for a permanent law to make it mandatory for the county to have a high school. Despite difficulties, the bill passed.

When A. H. Fuller was superintendent, he conducted a competitive examination in June of 1904 with a prize being a \$1500 scholarship to Oxford University in England; the prize won by John A. Pearson. At this time there were 70 elementary schools in the county, 68 for white children and 12 for black children. Salaries ranged from \$30 to \$75 per month for elementary teachers and from \$75 to \$120 for high school teachers. The high school term was for nine months while that of elementary schools was only five months—two summer months and three winter months. This split term permitted cotton to be picked.



*Doctors*

Prominent physicians who practiced during this period were Dr. G. L. Laws in the vicinity of Parker's Crossroads; a Dr. Graves at Poplar Springs; a Dr. England at Luray; Drs. Goff and Milan at Chesterfield, later coming to Lexington; a Dr. Johnson at Shady Hill, later moving to Lexington; Drs. Arnold, Brandon, Davidson, who was also the county doctor, Johnson, and Watson at Lexington. Practicing dentists included Drs. Pat McCall and W. B. Summers. McCall had an office in Lexington, but he also traveled to Sardis and other communities with his foot-peddled drill. Summers, a master mechanic in his profession, made dentures for patients himself. In the Middlefork Community initially there were Drs. George Arnold, Fesmire, who moved to Atwood, and Smith. Arnold later moved to Jackson. A Dr. Joyce practiced in the Center Hill and Thomas communities for 15 years before moving to Lexington.

At Sardis were Drs. Duckworth, Hanna, John Keeton, who later went to Saltillo and then to Clifton where he practiced until he died, Stinson, and Wilhite. At Scotts Hill were Drs. W. B. Keeton and a Wylie. Dr. W. T. Austin practiced briefly with Wylie. Dr. B. M. Brooks of Bath Springs practiced in and around Scotts Hill. Dr. J. F. Pipkin moved from Mississippi to Cedar Grove. He led the successful effort to get a post office at Cedar Grove which was called Pipkin, since another post office in Tennessee had the name of Cedar Grove.

*Religion*

During these years, the Pentecostal, or "Holy Rollers," came into the county. They practiced talking in tongues and frequently opposed the use of doctors and medicines. Despite skepticism, their revivals were well attended, and their practices filled a vacuum left by some of the other denominations. The Church of Christ also began to grow. Among its main leaders was J. O. Brown, who also served as a minister. These groups were and still are strongly fundamentalistic.

Baptists showed a steady growth with the following churches being founded: Cedar Grove in 1906, J. T. Bradfield, pastor;

Darden in 1893, G. G. Joyner of Parsons, pastor; Huron in 1891, with J. W. Barnette, pastor; Lexington 2nd, J. S. Bell, pastor; Luray in 1896, J. W. Barnette, pastor; Pleasant Hill in 1916, W. J. Barness of Wright, pastor; Sardis in 1914, J. T. Bradfield, pastor; Union Hill in 1902, W. L. King of Parsons, pastor.

In 1902, Fleetwood Ball, a young Baptist minister from Henry County, came to Henderson County. Ball was a well-educated, skilled speaker and a hard-driving social and religious worker. In 1907, he married Flossie Lee Melton of Lexington. She died in 1918 leaving four young daughters. Brother Ball, as he was affectionately called, was pastor of the Lexington Baptist Church for more than 40 years, at Rock for 30, Chapel Hill for 25, as well as at Piney Creek and Union churches. He served 22 consecutive years as moderator of the Beech River Baptist Association and also as recording secretary of the Tennessee Baptist Convention for 16 years. For many years, he had the distinction of marrying more couples and of preaching more funerals than any other person in the county.

#### *Politics and Government*

The 52nd General Assembly abolished direct representation from Henderson County and floated the county with Madison County. The first floterial representative for both counties was Thad Pope of Madison County. From then until 1967, all floterial representatives were Democrats from Henderson County, with one exception. P. O. Roberts, a staunch Republican, was a man with such integrity, that, in 1913, his election caused an upset since the district was overwhelmingly Democratic. Also during this period, John L. Hare, a local Democrat, was elected to the Senate. He was a popular merchant at Alberton which, despite its being strong Republican territory, supported Hare.

During the special session of the 1920 Legislature, called by Governor Roberts, the approval of the 19th Amendment to the U.S. Constitution was considered. This amendment gave women the right to vote. Active in the final voting of the House was floterial representative A. S. Montgomery of Lexington.

Prominent local Republican leaders at the turn of the century were W. F. Applyby, F. M. and C. C. Davis, J. R. Dennison,



Courthouse Square, looking down North Main, 1900

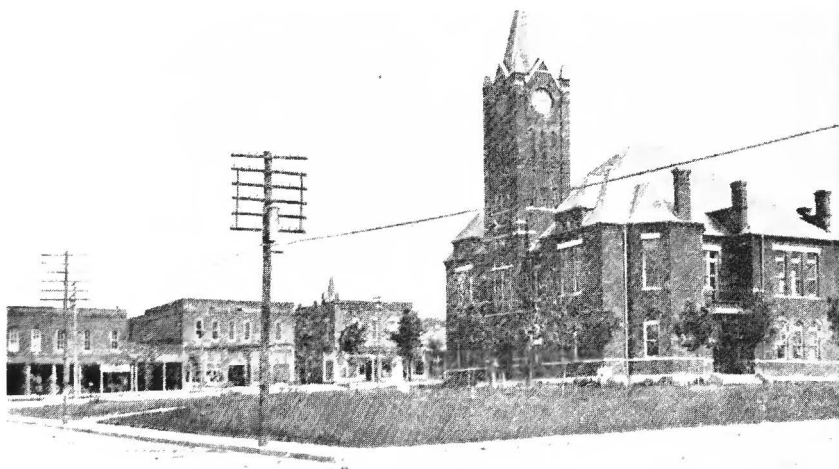
Thompisie Edwards, E. W. Essary, Ellis Evans, John Franklin, G. W. Goff, J. A. Jones, brothers T. A. and W. H. Lancaster, R. A. Lewis, Andrew Long, J. F. Martin, W. H. McBride, John E. McCall, W. T. McPeake, Jim Page, J. C. Peterson, P. O. Roberts, S. F. Rosson, John B. Scott, G. W. Stewart, John L. Sullivan, Jasper Tate, Bud Wilkerson, W.R. Wilson, and W. R. Wright. McCall was a recognized leader, skilled orator, and accomplished lawyer. He was elected to Congress in 1896 to serve one term and to the Legislature also to serve one term. In 1905, President Teddy Roosevelt appointed McCall federal judge for West Tennessee where he served until his death in 1920. After 1905, Feak Davis, Will Applyby, the Lancaster brothers, and E.W. Essary became the most recognized leaders.

Outstanding Democrat leaders at the same time were W. V. Barry and his son Henry, James L. Cochran, L. T. Fielder, Henry Graper, John F. Hall, John L. and T. A. Hare, C. C. Johnson, A. S. Montgomery, Walter Pearson, and David E. Scott.

The political leaders after 1900 continued to be influenced



Northwest Courthouse Square, about 1904, showing one of the first automobiles in the county.



Courthouse in 1920



Will Lawler, standing in Lawler Drug Store, around 1912,  
where First National Bank is now located.

by the Civil War, which was still an issue in many local political campaigns. Republicans did not hesitate to remind voters that Democrats were the rebels who tried to destroy the Union; Democrats, in turn, accused Republicans of destroying states' rights. Republicans had the advantage in Henderson County, due in part to the fact that many of the county's best speakers were both lawyers and Republicans. The influence of the Union veterans also still was felt. County citizens voted Republican by majority during this period, except in 1892 and 1896.

### *Banks*

The Bank of Lexington which was organized at the turn of the century was the first bank in the county with a capital stock of \$30,000. Before that time merchants, some businessmen, and farmers of wealth handled money and made loans. T. A. Lancaster was bank president and C. C. Davis was cashier. The Central State Bank was organized in 1907, with E. J.



Lexington, Main Street, looking south, 1912

Timberlake as cashier, who had formerly worked for the Bank of Lexington. Soon afterwards the Citizens Bank was organized with a capital stock of \$30,000, with W. T. Watson as president, H. E. Graper as vice-president, and J. S. Fielder as cashier. Later, banks were established at Darden, Sardis, Scotts Hill, and Wildersville.

#### *Newspapers*

The *Lexington Republican* was founded on January 1, 1894, by Felix Creasy and H. P. Barnes. The paper's machinery was brought to Lexington by the Reverend J. W. Drake who had published for six months the church paper, *Central Methodist*. In 1904, Creasy bought out Barnes' interest and continued to publish the paper for more than 40 years. He was a staunch Republican and editorially supported all Republican nominees for offices from the presidency to district magistrate. Creasy died in 1955, and the paper was then operated for a few years by a man from Centerville who changed the name to the *Lexington Leader*. Despite the changes, the paper soon closed operations.

In 1885 a man by the name of Musgrove began publishing a weekly paper in a frame building near the site of the active settlement Stegall. It was a well-organized and very newsy paper



consisting of four sheets; however, in less than a year it went out of business. In the late 1880s, Captain S. A. Mynders published a monthly magazine called the *Public Education Review*. B. A. Tucker published for three years the *Scotts Hill Banner*, a weekly paper, while he also operated the school. Students helped him gather the news. The paper was well received, but at Darden's death, the *Banner* went out of business. J. F. Howser published a newspaper in Sardis, the first issue appearing on January 22, 1897.

### *Early Resorts*

Before the turn of the century, Joe B. Hinson built a frame hotel near a spring two miles southwest of Lexington near the railroad line. Its elevated dirt walk covered by gravel led from the depot to the hotel. Hinson Spring was believed to have medicinal value, since it contained magnesium and iron. In a short time, the hotel burned. Four years later, Jim Long rebuilt the hotel and operated it until fire again destroyed it. Long again rebuilt and operated it until three businessmen from Illinois—Barcroft, Pinkstaf, and Montgomery—purchased the hotel. A beautiful stone structure was added to the older building. Barcroft gained control and operated the hotel until its final destruction by fire in 1914. During its operation, Hinson Springs was a noted southern resort.

Another popular resort, Crawford Springs, was located near the Madison County line. It was prominent during the early 1920s and was owned by wealthy fox hunters from Jackson and Memphis. There was a good spring and well-kept cabins.

### *Tragedies*

On March 13, 1913, a devastating tornado hit the northern part of Lexington. It dropped first near the county poor farm, causing no damage or injury, but went on to destroy completely the railway station at Hinson Springs and to level a 200-yard path near Montgomery School. Despite heavy property losses, only two deaths occurred.

The year of 1917 frequently has been called "Scotts Hill's

year of near destruction.” On May 27, one of the worst tornados known to the area occurred and on October 16, a disastrous fire destroyed local businesses, the post office, grist mill, blacksmith shop and five residences. *The Commercial Appeal* in Memphis reported the fire under the headline “Scotts Hill Laid in Ashes.” The industrious people of the area immediately rebuilt and, by Christmas, businesses had returned to normal.

Perhaps the greatest railroad tragedy ever to occur in Tennessee happened on July 9, 1918, about five miles west of Nashville when westbound NC&StL’s Train No. 4 and the eastbound Train No. 281 collided head on. Over 100 people were killed or injured. A large number of service men were on both trains, going home for furloughs before going overseas. Among those killed was Webster Johnson, who was going to his Middleburg home to see his newborn son.

### *World War I*

When World War I began the United States was unprepared; as usual, Henderson County was ready to do its part. On June 5, 1917, all men in Henderson County between the ages of 21 and 31 registered in compliance with the draft. The first registration totaled 1431. Later, the requirement was changed to include the ages from 15 to 45. This raised the county registration total to 3599. Of these 448 were drafted and 149 volunteered for service. Approximately 402 residents crossed the Atlantic Ocean and saw combat action. Most Henderson Countians served in the 30th or 81st or 82nd divisions. Physicians commissioned to serve in the war were Drs. Jesse Goff, Gecova Maxwell, and Bell, who later died in service.

On November 11, 1918, when the firing had ceased, Germans and Americans raced across no-man’s land to shake hands. Among those there were Wesley Yates of Shady Hill and E. G. “Grady” Woody of Scotts Hill. Woody took pride in having shaken hands with a corporal named Adolph Hitler, whose name would later bring the Western World to war. Eff McCall, brother of the late John A. McCall, a prominent local

banker, attained the rank of major, which was the highest rank any Henderson Countian acquired.

Tom Frank Barrett of the Reagan and Center Hill communities was the most highly decorated serviceman, receiving a certificate for service deemed far beyond the call of duty, which was presented to him personally by General Pershing. Winston Little also received medals for outstanding service. When the other men in his machine gun crew were killed, Little used the machine gun to destroy an entire enemy platoon. Sidney Ayers of Poplar Springs won medals for heroic service in the battles of St. Mihiel, Meuse, and the Argonne. Homer Buck of Mt. Gilead Community was the only local serviceman to have been killed in action. He was buried in the Mt. Gilead cemetery. There were, however, 30 men who lost their lives in the service due to wounds or disease. Homer Wheatley returned home a seemingly healthy man only to die within a short time as a result of his exposure to poison gas in Europe.

## Post—World War I

### *Agriculture*

Hugh Powers, an excellent county agent, organized pig and other clubs for young farmers. Vocational agriculture was available in the county schools in 1921 for high school boys who wished to have a project on some phase of farming. Boys in club work competed for places on judging teams that were sent to the West Tennessee Fair and to the Mid-South Fair for competition against other county teams. Area boys who were recognized for outstanding work were Lloyd Davis, Charles Deere, Carmon Duck, Warren Holmes, Roy McPeake, Troy McPeake, Frank Maness, Harry and Noble Mullins, Irby Park, Bobby Pope, Fay Pope, John L. Pope, Rex Pope, Auburn Powers, Ohlen Reed, Floyd Richardson, J. L. Ross, Tillford Sellers, G. Tillman Stewart, Charles Taylor, Edward Timberlake, Loyal Tyler, Glen Walker, and Poley Walker. Georgia Roberts was the first

home demonstration agent. Nell Jackson of Poplar Springs was among the first girls to receive recognition through the girls' club.

During the mid-1920s, the Fordson tractor became popular; it was followed by the Farmall (International) and John Deere. These early tractors had steel wheels with cleats for traction. Rubber tires supplanted the cleat wheels by the 1930s. The use of horses and mules decreased rapidly as the use of tractors increased. By the time World War II began, at least 80 percent of farm equipment was motorized.

Purebred livestock became even more popular with Hereford and Shorthorn cattle becoming common. Purebred bulls were used to improve the grade of cattle. Duroc-Jersey, Poland China, and Ohio Improved Chester were the leading breeds of swine, until the Hampshire was introduced in the mid-1930s by Griff Dodd.

Soon after the inauguration of Franklin D. Roosevelt on March 4, 1933, Senator Frank Norris interested Roosevelt in a large experimental project in the Tennessee River Valley. People in that area were suffering from the full blast of the Depression, and the proposed project would furnish employment and electric power for rural areas while conserving the soil. It was through this initial agreement that the Tennessee Valley Authority later was to be born.

The project directly benefitted Henderson County. Powers resigned as county farm agent to work with TVA. Bob Darnall succeeded Powers as county agent. Eventually, some 25,000 acres of submarginal land in the eastern part of the county were purchased and taken out of cultivation. Farmers who owned these farms, usually poor hill farms, received good prices for the land which enabled them to buy other land or to move.

### *Lawyers*

Outstanding young lawyers who began practice in Lexington during the years that followed World War I were Joe Appleby, Joe Davis, E. W. "Jude" Essary, Jr., and Elmer Stewart. Davis and Appleby were both jury and general practice lawyers. Davis and Roy Hall, another native, completed prelaw at Union University

and the University of Tennessee and continued study at Georgetown University in Washington, D.C., where their diplomas were presented to them personally by President Calvin Coolidge. Stewart's superior scholastic work won him a trip to Hollywood where his picture was made with Raymond Navarro and the cast of the silent film *Ben Hur*. Essary gained local prominence in his handling of domestic cases.

### *Doctors*

Better roads enabled doctors to make fewer house calls since patients now had better access to medical offices and facilities. Physicians whose practices were in Lexington at this time were Drs. Jim Arnold, G. A. Brandon, "Pete" Conger, J. F. Goff, W. I. Howell, W. F. Huntsman and his daughter, Cornelia, C. H. Johnson, J. P. Joyce, and Gecova Maxwell. Conger, a highly successful surgeon, was a native of the county, but began his practice in Decaturville. Later, he moved to Lexington where he and Brandon built a clinic which eventually housed 30 beds. Dr. Cornelia Huntsman was the first female to practice medicine in Henderson or in any adjacent county, with the exception of Madison. Drs. C. E. Bolen and W. D. Bradfield practiced out of Wildersville at Christian Chapel Community, R. L. Wylie at Scotts Hill, Gib Howell at Sardis, and C. B. Chaffey at Luray.

### *Education*

The Henderson County Board of Education purchased 35 acres of land in 1920 on which to build a high school. This land included the present site and extended to the railroad. After Highway 22 (Broad Street) was built, the board divided lots on the east side of the highway and sold them for residential use.

In 1921 there were two more elementary schools added for white children. Lexington still had the only four-year high school in the county. Students continued to tend crops so elementary school terms were only five months long. This split term was not discontinued until 1965. The Lexington city elementary school operated nine months as did the high school. A junior high school also was established in connection with the

high school at Lexington. Until 1921, the high school and the grammar school operated together in the building where the old city school was located. This building is now the civic center and senior citizens' building.

Students who attended Lexington High School consisted primarily of three groups: those who lived in or near Lexington; those who boarded; or those who walked, came by train, horse, or buggy. The Perryville Branch train began picking up students at Perryville and stopped at Chesterfield, Darden, Reeds Crossing, and Warrens Bluff. At times as many as 35 students rode the train, some of whom walked as many as four miles to meet the train.

When Austin Peay was elected governor in 1922, he began a successful effort to completely revamp the state's educational system. The Legislature levied a tax on tobacco to provide financial aid in counties to permit longer school terms. Qualifications for teachers were raised, with the average salary for elementary teachers being \$60 per month until 1925, when it was increased to \$85. County superintendents were elected by the county court until 1935 when the Legislature changed procedure to election by the people. Election returned to the court in 1939 only to return to the people again in 1953.

In the mid-1920s, Ira C. Powers was made principal of Scotts Hill. Due to his hard work, Scotts Hill was made a senior high school in 1929 with P. H. Murphy as principal. There has been some difficulty in the school's operation since it is situated in two counties. The line between Decatur and Henderson counties actually went through the school building, dividing it between the counties.

Sardis became a senior high school in 1931–1932, with first school bus service beginning in 1932. The bus, a Chevrolet frame with a wooden body, was purchased and driven by principal Auburn Powers. As more roads were graveled, bus service increased, and by 1940, both elementary and high school students were bused. Other early bus drivers were B. D. Anderson, Vales Bush, V. F. Grissom, John Little, John Long, and Clyde Walker. Howard Wylie hauled students to school at Sardis



Henderson County and Lexington City Boards of Education, 1932. *Left to right: front row, Mrs. W. R. Holland, Mrs. M. B. Hart (wives of board members), E. D. Deere, Mrs. William Houston (wife of board member); back row, G. W. Stewart, E. W. Essary, Sr., W. R. Holland, E. P. Segerson, M. B. Hart, A. W. Holmes, Houston Creasy, Superintendent G. Tillman Stewart.*

in 1931 in a wagon pulled by mules, and Ed Mitchell hauled students to Sardis from Union Hill Community.

An aggressive and intelligent leader, Ben Douglass of Lexington, emerged during these years in the county. After graduation from the University of Tennessee at Knoxville, he accepted a position as vocational agriculture teacher at Sardis. He taught an adult agriculture class there that surpassed others in the state. Douglass accepted a statewide position and became a political leader.

The education of blacks greatly advanced during these years. The Lexington elementary school became a junior high school with E. A. Grey as principal. It was through the influence of A. S.

Montgomery that both Lexington and the county made improvements in the administration of black education, and a county school was named in his honor. Montgomery also served as chairman of the city board of education and worked in behalf of black education.

C. C. Bond came to the Montgomery School in 1934, and the school became a four-year high school, although buildings were frame and inadequate. Repairs were made with the help of the National Youth Program; a gymnasium was built at a cost of less than \$500; and a dormitory was built for those students from Chester, Hardin, Madison, McNairy, and Perry counties, who boarded at the school in 1937.

During World War II, the schools in the county were at a standstill. Male teachers of military age were called into service, and a number of female teachers worked at Milan ammunition plant. Teacher vacancies were filled by unqualified people who taught on a permit basis.

#### *Transportation and Communication*

Railroads had their biggest passenger business during the 1920s, and the trucking industry was in its infancy. Highway 20 was the only paved road when it was completed in 1931. All other weather roads were graveled. The number of automobiles estimated to be in the county by 1930 was over 500; an exact count was not available since no registration or license law existed.

In spite of the Depression people continued to travel. The Greyhound Bus Company was granted a franchise to run through Henderson County in 1934. Neisler Transfer Company, a freight company owned by Johnson Neisler of Lexington, received a franchise to haul freight from Memphis to Nashville. Neisler's business became successful and was sold to Whitney Transfer Company of Bowling Green, Kentucky, who maintained a branch office at Lexington, operated by Whitney's son. The Lexington branch office provided help to local merchants and citizens, in Decatur and Henderson counties. The Perryville railroad branch discontinued service in 1934, ending its most useful local service.



The Bell System purchased the telephone company formerly owned by Cumberland and Home and made improvements in service, especially in that of long distance. Party lines still were in existence, and it was not until after World War II that dial phones came into use locally.

### *The Depression*

On October 29, 1929, the bottom fell out of the stock market and many banks soon failed; but, it was not until 1932 that the full force of the Depression hit Henderson County. The American Red Cross and other local agencies tried to cope with the situation but could not care adequately for the unemployed and financially needy. Cotton was still the county's money crop, even though it dropped to five cents per pound. Consequently, farmers were unable to pay their debts. Others could not pay taxes which meant there was no money to pay teachers and other county officials. Likewise, the state failed to make its payments to counties. At first teachers' checks were discounted by ten percent and later by 20 percent. By 1934, the checks could not be discounted at any price except to a few speculators who frequently gave 30 percent.

After Roosevelt was elected president, his first official act was to close banks. Upon his recommendation, Congress quickly passed the Emergency Act which gave the president authority to reopen the banks by March 13, if they were solvent. Banks at Darden, Luray, and Wildersville were closed permanently, and many area farmers lost their life savings. While the banks were closed, checks could not be accepted nor cashed and those who had money in banks could not use it. Fortunately, Henderson Countians made the best of a bad situation by living out of their gardens and smoke houses, using their cows for milk products and their other stock for meat. Staples were divided with the less fortunate. At the end of the Depression, only ten percent of the area families had an annual income in excess of \$2000.

With congressional approval Roosevelt dealt with the problems of the Depression. Many government agencies were created, such as the Works Progress Administration, or WPA. Hundreds of residents were put to work on different projects

with pay of \$19 per month. Also, out of the Depression came the Federal Deposit Insurance Corporation, FDIC, which guaranteed bank deposits up to \$5000. This action restored confidence in banks, and the banks that survived the early part of the Depression could now lend money.

In addition to putting people to work, the government made hot lunches available to schools. Ruby Beasley of Lexington became supervisor of the school lunch program. Even students in remote one-teacher schools received the same menu. The National Youth Administration, or NYA, was organized to employ young men and high school age boys. W. L. "Preacher" Coffman of Mt. Gilead Community headed the local program. Through its activities, schools throughout the county were repaired. A welfare program was established in Henderson County with Elizabeth Pearson in charge. The intent of the program was to pay those people who were unable to work or could not obtain work. Although it was Roosevelt's intent that all programs designed to combat the Depression would be only temporary, the relief program became permanent. Pearson and her staff continued to serve the county for over 30 years.

The Depression had eased somewhat by 1936 but did not completely abate until World War II. Cotton prices rose to ten cents a pound which was a far cry from the better than 40 cents per pound paid shortly after World War I. The establishment of the Salant & Salant shirt factory at Lexington helped the county in fighting the Depression economy, even though it hired mostly women and paid low wages. The Ayers Mineral Company built a plant to process sand located south of the depot near the railroad switch in Lexington. Land owners sold sand which was carried to the plant, graded and processed; then shipped by freight car to other places. As many as 50 freight carloads were shipped per week providing a boom to the Depression economy. Sam Lewis served as manager during most of the plant's operations and as many as 25 people were employed. Tomatoes had begun to be grown on a commercial basis as the Depression started but continued to be grown even after the Depression subsided. The tomato buying and grading site was located at Lexington.

## World War II to the Present

In Henderson County 1630 men were drafted into various branches of service at the start of World War II. The total number of volunteers and women who served is unknown. Males to the age of 45 and fathers with as many as eight children were drafted. In this terrible conflict, 69 native Henderson Countians lost their lives and over 300 were wounded. Many heroic deeds by Henderson Countians were carried out and many residents honored not only their homes but their country. Immediately after the war, the American Legion and the Veterans of Foreign Wars erected a memorial in honor of those who sacrificed their all.

In January of 1946 the Henderson County Quarterly Court created a County Veterans Service office in accordance with the legislation of 1945. The office was financed from county funds and was authorized by the county court to elect a service officer. The court left the election of this officer to the local American Legion organization, which was the only active service group in the county at that time. Three days later American Legion members met at the Lexington city hall and voted on three candidates: Dick Logan, Mayreene Dennison, and G. Tillman Stewart. Stewart was elected and received a salary of \$150 a month. This later increased to \$200, and funds were appropriated for a full-time secretary. The Veterans Service Office processed all applications for the G.I. Bill, as well as pensions, compensation, hospitalization, and other veteran benefits. Two years after the creation of this office, the Veterans of Foreign Wars, a national service organization, was created. The VFW then shared with the Legion the responsibility of naming the service officer.

Soon after the war ended, the government began returning bodies of soldiers who lost their lives for re-burial, when requested to do so by relatives. A military burial team was organized from veterans with H. B. "Brown" Williams as the first commander and G. Tillman Stewart as chaplain. Later, Dick Veteto served as commander. All bodies were carried by train,

and hundreds of people greeted the flag-draped coffins. Businesses closed for an hour during these arrivals. The Tennessee National Guard unit at Lexington later assumed these responsibilities.

A national guard building was erected with state and county funds. Among those instrumental in the establishment of the guard unit at Lexington were J. C. Fronabarger, County Judge E. L. Stewart, G. Tillman Stewart, and H. B. Williams. The team received a special citation in honor of its service from the State Adjutant General.

The Korean conflict, like that of Vietnam, was very unpopular; however, Henderson Countians fought bravely and represented the country well.



W. L. Barry

*Government and Politics*

In 1965, the Legislature reapportioned its districts and separated Madison and Henderson counties. Henderson was floated with Chester, Decatur, and Perry counties. W. L. "Dick" Barry was the first and only resident to achieve the speakership of the House and on his retirement in 1967, he became an administrative assistant to Governor Buford Ellington. Later, he became assistant state attorney general.

*Agriculture*

One of the drastic changes that was encountered in agriculture following World War II was the deterioration of cotton as the county's money crop. This was a result of the cost of fighting the boll weevil. By 1972, cotton fields ceased to exist, except in Middlefork and Rhodes communities. At the height of "White Gold," some 25 cotton gins had operated in the county; in 1978, only the one at Middlefork still operated. Soy beans supplanted cotton as a row crop, since they were less expensive to grow, brought good prices, and replenished the soil.

Livestock production increased by leaps and bounds. Although Black Angus became popular, the Hereford and Shorthorn breeds still were popular. Ernest Wallace was one of the county's best producers of high grade Shorthorns; Paul Flowers was responsible for introducing Charolais into the county, and Max Helms, for introducing top Hereford.

Hog farming for profit continued to expand after the war. The Snider brothers, John and Bobby, specialized in Landrace breeds. Their completely modern facility houses some 400 head. Other breeds common in the county now are Hampshire, Duroc, Yorkshire, and Poland China. Guy Walker owns and operates a sale barn for livestock, where sales take place every Monday. For the past six years, a feeder sale has occurred at the Roberts' barn on Natchez Trace Highway, where high grade feeder pigs command top prices.

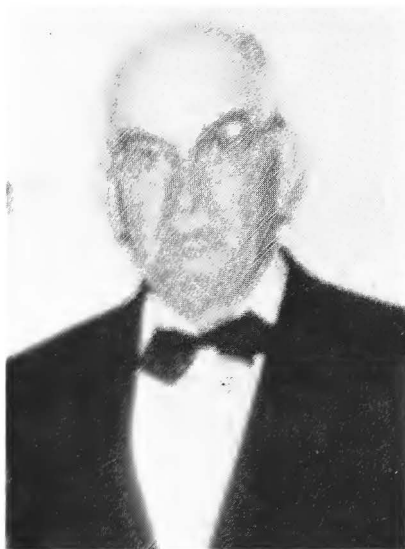
The number of farms and farmers locally has decreased, but there are still many first-class farmers, such as Haywood



J. T. Todd  
County Judge and Commissioner



Herbie Garner  
County Trustee



W. M. Goff  
former county trustee and  
chairman of county court



A young Hershal Hayes  
County Court Clerk



Bobby Dyer  
Circuit Court Clerk



Carthel Smith  
Lexington City Attorney



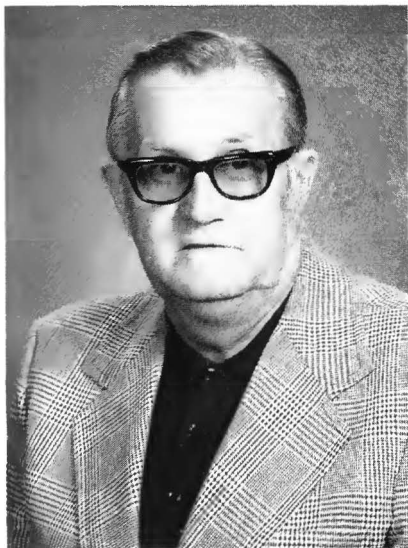
Denny Phillips  
Register of Deeds



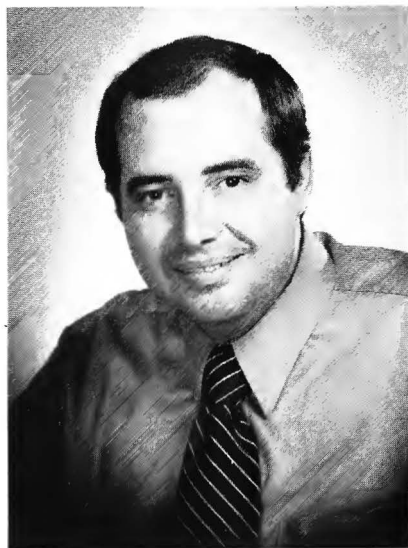
Robbie Wallace  
Clerk and Master



E. L. Stewart  
Chairman, Henderson County  
Board of Education



Elco Douglas  
County Tax Assessor



Danny Barker  
Veterans Service Officer



White of Ebenezer; Hyder White, J. T. Meggs, and Robert Presley of Scotts Hill area; the Youngermans of Shady Hill; Ralph Phillips of Sardis; Herman and Norman Wright of Sheppard; Gleeman Rhodes of Rhodes Town; Elbert and Jewell Britt of Palestine; Thomas McCullough of Park Meal; Cratis Wadley of the Middlefork-Mifflin area; Richard Odle of Old Huntingdon Road; John M. Douglas on Old Wildersville Road; Williard Park, Philmore McPeak, and Rex Frizzell of Chesterfield; and Bud Overman of Old Timberlake Road. Auburn Powers, Lucian Cravens, and Herbert Lawler have promoted the county's bee industry.

### *Doctors and Medicine*

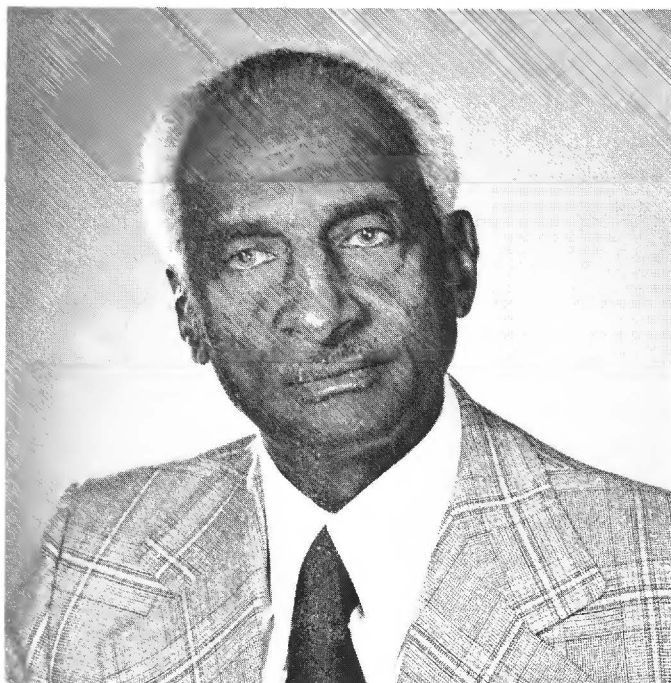
A new hospital was completed that can care for about 60 patients. A nursing home was built in late 1960 near the hospital, and another one was completed on Highway 20 early in 1978.

Physicians currently practicing locally include Drs. W. I. Howell, Warren Ramer, Striblin, Lowery, White, Crocker, and Wesley Jones. Recently, Warren Ramer, Jr., returned from medical school to join practice with his father. Dr. Mason Conger died on September 4, 1967, and Dr. Cornelia Huntsman retired soon thereafter. Dr. Gecova Maxwell practiced two years after the war before he died. Dentists in active practice include Drs. John M. Douglass, Maurice Bateman, L. E. Dickson, John Hugh Sullivan, and Larry Randy Woods. Ben Jarrett was killed in 1956 in an accident. Optometrists practicing include Drs. Wayne A. Hinson, David Lawler, Bennie McDaniel, David N. Montgomery, and Cole Chambers who retired in 1978.

### *Transportation*

Contemporary times witnessed the end to passenger railroad service, and freight trains began to average two a day instead of the previous dozen. The trucking industry, for the most part, has supplanted railroads in the hauling of freight, although some heavy freight still moves in and out of Henderson County by rail.

Improvements made in local highways since the war in-



A. L. Robinson, former teacher, coach, and principal of Montgomery School, Lexington, served as director of federal programs for desegregation and is now retired. He was recently appointed by Governor Lamar Alexander to the Commission on Aging.

cluded Highways 20 and 22 being reworked and repaved in most places; Highway 22 extended to Milledgeville; Highway 22A, the original road that goes through Jack's Creek, Enville, and Milledgeville, rejoins Highway 22; Highway 104 has been repaved; and Interstate 40 crossed the width of northern Henderson County. There are two exits to I-40 in the county, Exits 22 and 104. These exits have caused businesses to be built and have stimulated growth at Parker's Crossroads.

#### *Senior Citizens*

In 1974, a group known as the Diamond Set was organized for retired people. It first met once a month at the Methodist

Church in Lexington, then later at the Baptist church. As the group increased, the city of Lexington provided it with the old city school building, and the Senior Citizens' Organization came into being and affiliated with its national and state organizations. The building later was renovated and became the Civic Center. Auburn Powers was one of the leaders who worked untiringly for the welfare of the elderly. With federal appropriations and state and local aid, meals are served each week-day to the members. Scotts Hill senior citizens have purchased a building which they have renovated with the aid of a \$28,000 grant and other funds. Gordon Turner, who has successfully completed a term on the Commission on Aging, was instrumental in securing the grant.

### *Education*

With the war over, the new interest in education resulted in consolidation, better equipment, and improved qualifications for teachers. The first building in the consolidation program was Beaver, which eliminated ten one- and two-teacher schools.

Complete consolidation began in 1956 when the county board of education voted to eliminate all one- and two-teacher schools and requested the county court to provide proper funds. The court did respond, and a bond issue was ordered to fund the program. Three new sites were chosen for elementary schools: Pin Oak, Southhaven, and Westover. Bargerton and Reagan were also to be part of the system, and improvements were made at Scotts Hill and Sardis. Later, a new building was voted for Park Meal which consolidated the Pritchard school. A \$135,000 addition was made at Lexington High School in 1955–1956.

These changes were made before the integration of schools in 1964. Actual desegregation of schools occurred in 1967 when the board of education voted, with a minimum of disorder, to abolish the dual system. Montgomery School was abolished in regard to its use for black students only. Its high school students were transferred to Lexington, and its elementary students chose between attending Lexington city school or any of the county consolidated schools where transportation was furnished.



Bill Shelby, principal  
Lexington High School  
(1968-1976)



Ira C. Powers, principal  
Lexington High School



Danny Johnson, principal  
Sardis School



Charles "Dock" Woody, principal  
Scotts Hill



Sardis School



Scotts Hill School (backview)



W. L. Bobbitt

Integration overcrowded Lexington High School, and in 1963, it was recommended to the board that a new school building be erected on the campus, that a new building be erected at Scotts Hill, and that general improvements be made in the entire county system. The county court approved the board's recommendations, and a one-cent sales tax was recommended to finance the bonds. The final cost of the improvements was approximately one million dollars.

In 1973, the Legislature passed an act which provided that the state construct, equip, and operate a building if a county or city furnished land. These schools were to teach high school students skilled trades. After study, the state commissioner of education approved Lexington as such a site. The county school board purchased 20 acres of land from Joe Davis adjacent to the Montgomery school property for the building's construction.

After more than 30 years as principal of Lexington High School, the beloved W. L. Bobbitt retired at the end of the 1962–1963 school year. On August 31, 1974, W. L. Bobbitt Day was declared, and hundreds of his former students were present at the ceremony where he was presented with a new car and other special honors. Bobbitt was replaced by R. C. Rumfelt who



Dr. Claude C. Bond, retired educator; former assistant superintendent, Chattanooga City Schools; served as principal, Montgomery High School for 21 years.



Janis Shelby, former Henderson County teacher and supervisor;  
now assistant commissioner of education in charge of  
instruction and Title I.





Joe E. Davis,  
attorney and former  
mayor of Lexington



Attorney E. W. Essary,  
former county purchasing  
agent and city judge

resigned in 1967 to accept a position with Jackson State Community College. Rumfelt was succeeded by Casey Vinson who resigned two years later to work at Dyersburg State Community College. Bill Shelby then served as the principal for the school until 1977 when he assumed another such position at Franklin. Shelby was followed by Ira C. Powers.

### *Lawyers*

Attorneys who practiced after World War II are Joe C. Davis, E. L. Stewart, E. W. Essary, Jr., Terry Wright, and Robert E. White who died on January 14, 1971. Attorneys now practicing in Lexington include W. L. Barry, his partner Charlie Walker, Billy Brooks, William Martin, Carthel Smith, and Howard Douglass. Brooks is the county attorney, and Douglass is assistant attorney general.

*Religion*

Post World War II years spurred new construction or complete renovations at such area Baptist churches as Bible Grove, Central Grove, Chapel Hill, Corinth, Lexington, Mazies Chapel, Mt. Ararat, Mt. Gilead, Oak Grove, Ridge Grove, and Union. New Methodist churches were built at New Bethel and New Hope while renovations were made at Nebo, Poplar Springs, Sardis, and Shady Grove. A new building was erected at the Center Hill United Primitive Baptist. Renovations, repairs, or new buildings were constructed for Bargerton, Christian Chapel, Dyer's Chapel, Juno, Lexington, Sardis, and Stray Leaf Churches of Christ. Pentacostal churches were organized and built at Lexington, Palestine, and Ridley's Chapel; new Cumberland Presbyterian churches were built at Lexington and Palestine; a Church of God AME and an Assembly of God Church were built in Lexington; and Pilgrim Rest Negro Baptist Church at Lexington was completely renovated.

*Economics*

The postwar economy of Henderson County has been good with assets of five area banks reaching approximately \$50 million. Factories in the county employ some 3500 people with payrolls of \$1,750,000 per month. County tourism provides a tremendous asset since Natchez Trace Park and lakes formed by the Beech River Watershed attract thousands of people each year.

*Lexington*

The current population of Lexington now is estimated at over 6000. The city has become highly industrialized with many businesses and 25 factories. Beech Lake Shopping Center draws customers from surrounding counties. Even when businesses moved to shopping centers, the uptown business in Lexington remained good.

The government of Lexington consists of a mayor and seven aldermen, each serving a two-year term. In 1970, the police department was comprised of 13 men, a tremendous improve-



Lexington, Monroe Street, 1900



Lexington, Monroe Street, 1946

ment from 40 years before when it consisted of a chief and one assistant. In 1977, there was one fire station with four full-time personnel and 22 volunteers. Garbage disposal was done by municipal service with one pick up each week for residential and twice weekly for commercial.

Four freight lines serve Lexington: Meadows Motors, Volunteer Freight, McLean Trucking Company, and Mid-South Transport Lines. Lexington has an excellent airport, Franklin-Wilkins, located one mile from downtown. The 3600 x 75 foot asphalt runway is lighted, and the field has an administration building which is attended during daylight hours.

Lexington's radio station, WDXL, has both AM and FM programming. One of two educational television stations, WTLD, has its broadcasting facilities in the county and identifies itself as Lexington, Tennessee.

W. T. Franklin, Jr., bought the *Lexington Progress* in 1946. A World War II veteran, Franklin has served as president of the Tennessee Press Association and as vice-president and director of the Tennessee Press Service. The *Progress* under his leadership has received numerous awards. The new paper, the *Henderson County Times*, was established in 1978 by Lynn Pratt.



Present county courthouse, 1958



Edward Bailey  
Mayor of Lexington



William Martin  
former city attorney



Pug Vickers, Jr., president  
First National Bank, Lexington



Guy B. Amos, teacher, banker,  
and local industrial leader



Employees of First National Bank of Lexington



First National Bank of Lexington



Joe E. Hopper, attorney;  
former assistant U.S. district  
attorney and administrative  
assistant to Governor  
Winfield Dunn.

In April of 1956, a tornado hit Lexington near Barnhill Street and made a clean sweep northwest of the city. It came at a time when most people were working, but some were on their way home. The NYA building on the Lexington High School campus was completely destroyed and the gymnasium severely damaged with an estimated \$1,000,000 damage done. One woman was killed; 15 were injured, four seriously.

### *Sardis*

Sardis has experienced a complete change in its business structure since the war. The town has continued to grow despite the fact that no factory has located in Sardis. Van Smith is the mayor of Sardis, Larry Creasy is recorder, and Larry Lewis, J. W. Creasy, Gerald Roberts, George Maxie, and Lon C. Menon are aldermen. Sardis has three churches, Methodist, Baptist, and Church of Christ. Business firms there are: Danny Johnson Studio, Sardis Variety Store, Kelley's Feed Store, the Cloth

Shop, Nelms Beauty Shop, Scotts Service Station, Mada's Cafe, Peoples Bank, Herman's, Dan's Market, Pit Shop Cafe, Roger's Service Station, O. W. Hanna's Used Cars, Phillis Bartholomew's Beauty Shop, Bartholomew's Trucking Company, the Beauty Spot, Allene Phillips' Back Hoe Service, Bill Phillips Drag Line, Roy Medlin's Back Hoe Service, Montgomery's Taxidermy, Ce-Mars Leather Goods and Horse Supplies, Industrial Exterminating Company, and Crews and Sons Angus Farm.

### *Scotts Hill*

Scotts Hill also has grown considerably since the war with a population now estimated at 700. Former mayors are Gordon Turner, Hay Taylor Powers, and Clayton Tarlton. Wilson Miller is its present mayor. Scotts Hill has a well-organized fire department with a modern truck and has a full-time police department. Two factories are in operation which employ 300 people with an estimated payroll of \$30,000 per week. There is an American Legion Post, a Lions Club, and a Jaycees organization. A new post office has been built since the war, and a new bank is being built.

The following are businesses located at Scotts Hill: Austin's Cafe, B-Mart Grocery and Gas Station, Buck's Lumber Company, Citizen's State Bank, City Drugs, County Curls Beauty Salon, Campbell's Sign Shop, Charlotte's Beauty Salon, Ron Dunnavant Auto Service, Dennis' Tavern, Earl Dyer's Pool Room,

Henderson County Historical Society, 1979-1980. *Left to right: front row*, Linda Houston, O. D. Kelley, Minnie Adams, Carol Kelley (President), Arthurlene Hinson (Vice-President), Brenda King; *second row*, Ollie Faye Rhodes, Adelaide Lewis (Reporter), Louise Dodds, Elizabeth Lee, C. F. Lee, Virginia Butler, Ashley Adams (Director); *third row*, Phyllis McDaniel (Secretary), Steve McDaniel (society's first president), Dan Wood (Director), Barry Wood (Director), Lutie Houston, Auburn Powers, G. Tillman Stewart; *not present*, Ethel Bailey, Brenda Fiddler, Johnny Casselberry, Ann Fiddler, Clay Crook, Kenneth Houston, Charles Fiddler, Inez King, Denise Houston, Bella Ramsey, Benjamin Rhodes, Marie Stanfill, Marilyn Williamson, Mary Rushing.





E. E. Rhodes Furniture, Elgin's Drygoods, Farmers' Feed and Supplies, Farmers Bank, Franks Coin-Matic, Helms Lumber and Building Supplies, Ricky Hughes Grocery & Market, I. Appel Corporation, Kelly's Grocery, Kolpac, Johnson's General Merchandise, Jean Pipkin's General Merchandise, J. M. Brasher's Sales, Pipkins, M.F.A. Insurance Agency, McCormick's Plumbing & Wiring, Redford Grissom's Service Station, J. E. Taylor's Grocery, and Appliance, and Reda, Dale McCormick.

# Appendix

## Chancellors

Andrew McCampbell, 1844-1848	W. H. Dennison*, 1921-1922
Calvin Jones, 1848-1854	Tom C. Rye, 1922-1942
Stephen C. Pavatt, 1854-1861	Gordon Browning, 1942-1943
G. H. Nixon, 1870-1886	Wayne A. Cox, 1943-1968
Albert G. Hawkins, 1886-1906	Aaron C. Brown, 1969-
E. L. Bullock, 1906-1913	<i>*from Henderson County</i>
J. W. Ross, 1913-1921	

## County Trustees

Abner Lawler, 1861-1866	T. R. Sisson, 1926-1932; died in office
Charlie Rogers, 1866-1870	Mrs. T. R. Sisson, 1932-1934; finished husband's term
Felix Henry, 1870-1874	William M. Goff, 1934-1942
Buck Priddy, 1874-1878	Clyde Reeves, 1942-1944; armed services
William Carral, 1878-1882	Mrs. Clyde Reeves, 1944-1945; completed husband's term
Sam Howard, 1886-1890	Clyde Reeves, 1945-1954
Andrew Long, 1890-1894	Plautt Lindsey, 1954-1974
Bud Essary, 1894-1898	Herby Garner, 1974-
T. Edwards, 1898-1906	<i>*exact dates are uncertain.</i>
W. T. McPeake, 1906-1910	
S. F. Rosson, 1910-1914	
W. F. Applyby, 1914-1918	
Carl Edwards*	
Ernest Reed*	

## General Sessions Judges

W. H. Dennison, Terry Wright, and J. B. Johnson

## County Judges

W. M. Taylor, T. A. Lancaster, W. H. Lancaster, W. F. Applyby, L. B. Johnson, F. M. Davis, E. L. Stewart, Clyde Reeves, Vaughn Miller, and J. T. Todd.

## Clerk and Masters

W. F. Brooks, 1885-1887; resigned	W. V. Barry, 1911-1942
C. R. Scott, 1887-1893; resigned	D. G. Hudson, 1942-1946
E. F. Boxwell, 1893-1911	Robbie Wallace, 1946-

## County Court Clerks

John A. Wilson, 1822-1835	Sid Rhodes, 1930-1938; died in office
Jesse Taylor, 1835-1860	Joe Appleby, 1938-1946
A. H. Rhodes, 1860-1878	Hal Johnson, 1946-1964; died in office
C. R. Scott, 1878-1886	Mildred (Mrs. Hal) Johnson, 1964-1966
J. A. Teague, 1886-1890	Hershell Hayes, 1966-
D. A. Griggs, 1890-1898	
Asa Davis, 1898-1906	
J. W. Page, 1906-1922	
Paul Parker, 1922-1930; died in office	

## County Registers

O. H. King, 1822-1832	J. R. Dennison, 1922; completed Sullivan's term
S. A. Orton, 1832-1836	C. L. Scates, 1922-1934
John H. White, 1836-1844	M. H. Teague, 1934-1941
John Smith, 1844-1856	Mrs. M. H. Teague, 1941-1942
J. A. Henry, 1856-1884	M. H. Tolley, 1942-1950
T. A. Smith, 1884-1888	G. Tillman Stewart, 1950-1954
J. A. Jones, 1888-1896	Jimmy Essary, 1956-1978
J. C. Peterson, 1896-1908	Denny Phillips, 1978-
J. L. Sullivan, 1908-1922; resigned	

## Circuit Court Clerks

E. H. Tarrant, 1828-1836	J. C. Wilkins, 1895-1896
Addison Tyle, 1836-1844	R. B. Lewis, 1896-1902
R. B. Jones, 1844-1866	P. O. Roberts, 1902-1906
James Priddy, 1866-1870	W. F. Applyby, 1906-1910
E. J. Timberlake, 1870-1874	Will Dyer, 1910-1918
I. T. Bell, 1874-1878	John B. Scott, 1918-1926
J. A. Teague, 1878-1882	Alfred Wallace, 1926-1934
A. G. Douglass, 1882; resigned	James Page, 1934-1938
E. W. Essary, 1882-1886	Andrew Todd, 1938-1950
H. C. Lindsey, 1886-1890	Edward Pruett, 1950-1974
W. R. Britt, 1890-1894	Bobby W. Dyer, 1974-
J. R. Wilson, 1894-1895	.

## Circuit Court Judges

Joshua Haskell, 1823-1838	P. P. Bond, 1870-1873
John Read, 1838-1860	L. L. Hawkins, 1867-1873
Special judges held court during Civil War	T. B. Bateman, 1873-1886
Fielding Hurst (first judge after Reconstruction)	Levi S. Woods*, 1886-1908
	D. W. Herring, 1908; served five months

N. R. Barnham, 1908-1926  
I. A. England, 1926-1929  
W. H. Dennison, 1929-1934  
Frank Johnson, 1934-1947

J. I. Galbraith, 1947-1948  
A. T. Taylor, 1948—  
*\*from Henderson County*

## Sheriffs

John T. Harmon, served until 1826  
Robert Marshall, 1826-1832  
S. M. Cason, 1832-1836  
R. B. Jones, 1836-1842  
John Howell, 1842-1846  
G. H. Buck, 1846-1850  
John Howell, 1850-1854  
W. B. Hall, 1854-1856  
W. H. Shelby, 1856-1860  
J. H. Galbraith, 1860-1862  
Levi McEwen, 1862-1866  
R. J. Dwyer, 1866-1868  
G. W. Moss, 1868-1869  
J. A. Teague, 1869-1871  
A. E. Aydelott, 1871-1874  
J. M. Wadley, 1874-1878  
A. G. Douglass, 1878-1882  
E. W. Essary, 1882-1886  
H. C. Lindsey, 1886-1890  
William Azbill, 1890-1892  
Bud Carlton, 1892-1894  
G. W. Goff, 1894-1898  
Jasper Tate, 1898-1902

John Franklin, 1902-1908  
S. F. Rosson, 1908-1912  
J. F. Martin, 1912-1914  
W. H. McBride, 1914-1918; killed  
April 20, 1918  
Leroy Swain, April to October of  
1918  
W. R. Wright, 1918-1923  
T. R. Sisson, 1923-1928  
Dorsey Stewart, 1928-1934  
John Chalk, 1934-1938  
Dorsey Stewart, 1938-1940  
Henry Patton, 1940-1942  
Hal Johnson, 1942-1946  
Troy Gilliam, 1946-1948  
Ernest Wilkins, 1948-1952  
Dick Goff, 1952-1956  
George Teague, 1956-1962  
Ray Hays, 1962-1966  
James Todd, 1966-1972  
Red Percy, 1972-1976  
Jack Fowler, 1976-

## County School Superintendents

Levi S. Woods, 1872-1873  
Billie Brooks, 1873-1876  
Addison Henry, 1876-1880  
T. J. Brooks, 1880-1886  
Judge R. H. Thorn, 1886-1888  
Y. A. Jackson, 1888-1892  
W. R. Wilson, 1892-1898  
Mrs. L. T. Fielder, 1898-1902  
A. H. Fuller, 1902-1905  
C. P. Patterson, 1905-1907

W. H. Dennison, 1907-1917  
O. E. Holmes, 1917-1919  
J. O. Brown, 1919-1921  
R. E. Powers, 1921-1930  
G. Tillman Stewart, 1930-1939  
Ira C. Powers, 1939-1954  
G. Tillman Stewart, 1954-1958  
Ashley Adams, 1958-1962  
G. Tillman Stewart, 1962-1974  
Jerry Graves, 1974-

## \*Tax Assessors

E. G. Woody, Gaston Frizzell, Irby Pope, Leo Jones, J. D. Roberts, and Elco Douglas.

*\*according to available records*

## State Legislators from Henderson County

*Senate*

Henry Hill Brown, 1823-1825;  
1835-1841  
Hezekiah Bradbury, 1841-1849;  
1851-1853  
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Mildred Kent and G. Tillman Stewart

### *About the Author*

G. Tillman Stewart was born November 21, 1906, in Lexington, Tennessee. His father, G. W., was appointed U.S. Deputy Marshall by President Theodore Roosevelt. Subsequently, the Stewart family lived at the Henderson County Poor Farm for 12 years.

Stewart's early education included years at Palestine and Maple Grove schools. He was graduated from Lexington High School and, in 1930, the University of Tennessee. At the university, Stewart was president of the Chi Delta Debating Society, captain of the track team, and cross-country two-mile champion in 1930.

After one year as coach and teacher at Lexington High School, Stewart was elected superintendent of Henderson County Schools and, at age 24, was believed to be the youngest in the nation to hold that office. From 1940 to 1943, he served as principal of Parsons School in Decatur County and later as principal of Morris Chapel School in Hardin County.

After his service in World War II, Stewart became the county



veterans service officer and later the county register. From 1954 to 1958 and from 1962 to 1974, he resumed the office of county school superintendent. Following his retirement from this position, Stewart became president-elect of the Tennessee Retired Teachers Association on June 30, 1977, and later assumed the presidency upon the death of Thomas O. Dye. During Stewart's long and distinguished professional career, he has filled many important positions and made innumerable contributions to education in Tennessee.

G. Tillman Stewart is an elder and superintendent of Sunday School at the Cumberland Presbyterian Church, where he has taught for 52 consecutive years. He is a Mason and a charter member of the Rotary Club. For four years he has been a licensed paralegal for Henderson, Hardin, and Decatur counties and is currently employed by Federal Southwest Development Corporation. Stewart has been the official Henderson County historian for more than ten years.